Contact Zones: Sport and Race in The Northern Territory, 1869–1953

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Thesis submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

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Declaration

I hereby declare that the work herein, now submitted as a thesis for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at Charles Darwin University, is the result of my own investigations, and all references to ideas and work of other researchers have been specifically acknowledged. I hereby certify that the work embodied in this thesis has not already been accepted in substance for any other degree, and is not being submitted in candidature for any other degree.
Abstract

Sport and sports fields the world over are contested ground, a form of public theatre. In the Northern Territory sport is a hotly contested social and political terrain where issues of race and identity continually collide. Palmerston (Darwin after 1911), the Northern Territory’s first permanent White settlement, established in February 1869, rather precariously marked colonial Australia’s northern frontier. Its enervating tropical climate, diverse but deeply divided cultures, frontier attitude and proximity to Asia gave it a distinctive character. A social hierarchy developed dominated by a tight-knit White minority that simplistically delineated and distanced a White ‘us’ from an alien, non-White ‘them’. Sport had a privileged and prominent place in this society because it was one of the few sites where its diverse communities could come together, albeit conditionally. Sport was, and remains, an active and powerful social agent and an important barometer of changing values.

From 1869, to the end of the South Australian administration in 1911, sport was an essential means of constructing and sustaining White society. It did so by excluding or strictly segregating Aborigines, Chinese and other non-Whites. Then, from World War I to 1953, under the administration of the Commonwealth, sport, particularly Australian football, played an equally important role in transforming the Northern Territory into a more representative and inclusive society. For the non-White community, sport was a means of challenging the status quo and asserting its rights in the face of continuous institutional racism. Success in sport was a potent counter-narrative, a declaration of resistance and developed a strong sense of community identity. The evolution from sporting exclusion and segregation to integration and liberation for the Territory’s non-White sportsmen and women is an extraordinary story that until now has been largely overlooked by researchers. At the heart of this history is the struggle for human rights and recognition.
Acknowledgments

Many people have assisted me. Their encouragement, support, advice and willingness to share their knowledge have sustained my spirits and contributed to the preparation of this thesis.

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To all of the librarians of the Northern Territory Library and the archivists at the Northern Territory Archives Service, whose unerring professionalism meant that my research requirements were always met with good humour and efficiency: thank you.

I also would like to acknowledge the friendship and support of fellow PhD students Dr Wendy Beresford Manning and Kathy De La Rue with whom I share an office at Charles Darwin University. They always had time to assist with queries and share ideas. Kathy also provided invaluable assistance in proofreading the thesis.

I am forever grateful to Harry and Fay Stephen, who fostered my love of sport and history and gave me every opportunity to pursue them. Finally, to Joanna Barrkman whose constant patience, support and friendship throughout made this thesis possible.
Language Use

Official and social contemporary language use about Aborigines and other non-White people was almost always hurtful and derogatory in the period covered by this research. The legislative record is erratic. Some statutes used the noun ‘Aboriginals’, some used ‘Aborigines’. Government reports routinely used ‘coolies’, ‘Chinaman’, ‘blacks’, ‘natives’ and ‘Abos’. When referring to people of mixed descent, ‘coloured’ was a common term. When mixed descent included an Aboriginal parent, ‘half-castes’, ‘part-Aboriginal’, ‘quadroon’, ‘three-quarter caste’ and ‘octoroon’ were some of the terms used. Social usage was, and is, different. ‘Whites’, ‘Blacks’, ‘Whitefellas’ and ‘Blackfellas’ are part of the vernacular. Many people still make the distinction between ‘Aboriginal’ and ‘Coloured’. The late Oodgeroo Noonuccal (Kath Walker) rightly objected to ‘part-Aborigine’: she said she was an Aborigine all of the time, not part of the time.

Quotations from official documents and historical records will, of course, be retained. Where it is necessary to refer to, or make distinctions between, specific groups, I vary my usage between Chinese and Asian, Aborigines and Blacks, between ‘White’ and ‘non-White’ or sometimes European or ‘non-Aboriginal’, and, generally, ‘Coloured’ for those of mixed descent.
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Citations; Title (Creator / Collection / Reference number)

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<td>AWU</td>
<td>Australian Workers Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>AFL</td>
<td>Australian Football League</td>
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<tr>
<td>ALP</td>
<td>Australian Labor Party</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAT</td>
<td>British Australian Telegraph Company</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CDU</td>
<td>Charles Darwin University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CLP</td>
<td>Country Liberal Party (Now Country Liberals)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPP</td>
<td>Commonwealth Parliamentary Paper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCRC</td>
<td>Darwin Chinese Recreation Club</td>
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<tr>
<td>GRIC</td>
<td>Government Resident Inwards Correspondence</td>
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<tr>
<td>HSNT</td>
<td>Historical Society of the Northern Territory</td>
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<td>MAGNT</td>
<td>Museum and Art Gallery of the Northern Territory</td>
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<td>ML</td>
<td>Mitchell Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAIU</td>
<td>North Australian Industrial Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAFL</td>
<td>North Australian Football League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NAWU</td>
<td>North Australian Workers Union</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NLA</td>
<td>National Library of Australia</td>
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<td>NTAS</td>
<td>Northern Territory Archives Service</td>
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<td>NTER</td>
<td>Northern Territory Emergency Response</td>
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<td>NTCAR</td>
<td>Northern Territory Council of Aboriginal Rights</td>
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<td>NTFL</td>
<td>Northern Territory Football League</td>
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<td>NTG</td>
<td>Northern Territory Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>PCA</td>
<td>The Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia</td>
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Part I: The Context
Introduction

Sport and sports fields the world over are contested ground, a form of public theatre that reveals a great deal about the social and cultural values of society. In the Northern Territory, sport has always been hotly contested social and political terrain where issues of race and identity continually intersect and collide. The Northern Territory’s extreme tropical climate and its small but diverse population have always given it a distinctive identity that sets it apart from southern Australia. Until the turn of the twentieth century, a White minority was outnumbered by an Aboriginal and Chinese majority. Although the Chinese population declined after 1900, the Aboriginal population remained a majority until the 1950s, and today comprises thirty-one percent of the population.¹ Sport has a privileged and prominent place in the Northern Territory because it is one of the few sites since permanent White settlement in 1869 where its diverse communities could come together socially, albeit conditionally. Sport is both an active and powerful social agent and an important barometer of changing values. This is particularly so in the Aboriginal community, which passionately embraced Australian football from the time of its introduction in 1916. In the words of one Aboriginal Tiwi Islander, ‘for the Tiwi people football means hope, it means pride and most of all it means life.’² It has not always been so.

From 1869 to the end of the South Australian administration in 1911, sport was an essential agency in constructing and sustaining White society. It did so by excluding or strictly segregating Aborigines, Chinese and other non-Whites. Then, from World War I to 1953, under the administration of the Commonwealth, sport played an equally important role in transforming the Northern Territory into a more representative, inclusive society. This study reveals that the evolution from sporting

Northern Territory population and social context is discussed in Chapter 1.
² David Moodie, ed. Tiwi Footy Yiloga (Singapore: F11 Productions, 2008), 105.
exclusion and segregation to integration and liberation is an extraordinary story of
talent and adversity, racism and respect, colour bars and breakthroughs, tolerance
and bigotry. At the heart is the struggle for human rights and recognition. Until now,
the journey from sporting exclusion to liberation for the Territory’s non-White
sportsmen and women has been largely hidden from researchers by apathy and myth.

Plate 1: Swimming Carnival Darwin, Oct 1915. [Darwin’s first swimming carnival, Fort
Hill Baths]. (Unknown, E D W S Donnison Collection, SLNSW, MLMSS 890/3 0205)

Contemporary reports often disguised and perpetuated myths that sustained a
romantic and idealised vision of White Northern Territory society.
Those who labour under the impression that the Northern Territory is no place for White men would have done well to have attended the Darwin Swimming Clubs Carnival … the born and bred Northern Territorians have given a good account of themselves … The Northern Territory Champion Cup, remains with Darwin in the charge of Reuben Cooper, who won easily from 12 starters.3

This report amongst others, conceals more than it reveals about Northern Territory social history. It paints a fragmentary picture of a Northern Territory as some might have imagined it but it ignores the contemporary social reality. The Northern Territory’s first swimming champion, and apparent White champion, Reuben Cooper, was the son of a legendary White buffalo hunter, Joe Cooper, and Alice, an Iwadja woman from the Cobourg Peninsula. Reuben Cooper was certainly a champion but he was not ‘White’. Northern Territory social history is replete with hidden, incomplete and untold stories. This thesis explores and examines Northern Territory social history through the lens of sport from 1869 to 1953. It relates a history of sport that has been largely untold, reclaims forgotten histories, and retells often-told histories to reveal that few places better illustrate Stuart Hall’s contention that ‘sport is a complex and inherently contradictory cultural arena that simultaneously serves to both challenge and confirm racial ideologies.’4

My interest in sport and social history is entwined in my career as an educator. I arrived in the Northern Territory in 1987 as a physical education and history teacher at Katherine High School. In 1990, I began ten years of teaching with the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education where I tutored, and later lectured, in the School of Education before moving into the field of recreation.5 Batchelor enabled

3 The Northern Territory Times and Gazette, 21 October 1915. White settlement was established at Palmerston, on Port Darwin in 1869. In 1911, the name was formally changed to Darwin. I use the common name according to the period.
5 Batchelor College, 1982–1999.
me to live and work in Aboriginal communities in the Barkly Tableland, Central Australia and Arnhem Land regions where I recognised the essential but paradoxical role that sport played in community life.

What struck me most about sport was its contradictions. First, there was the unifying effect that the joy of playing and watching sport engendered in communities amidst so much hardship. Second, there was the question why such committed and devoted athletes were simultaneously applauded and admired on the sports field yet marginalised and thwarted by the wider community when they attempted to translate their talents into endeavours such as western work and education. The unbridled joy and community pride displayed at winning at the annual sports carnival at Yuendumu, Burunga or Kiwirrikurra was sadly all too rare. In 1995, Colin Tatz released his seminal work Obstacle Race, the most authoritative study of Aboriginal sports history in Australia. It made an enormous impact on my thinking about the role of sport in the communities where I worked. Obstacle Race was focused on the 'big picture', and only touched briefly upon some episodes in Northern Territory Aboriginal sports history. It was nevertheless an important catalyst for my research. One of Tatz's many insightful observations resonates throughout this study:

For Aborigines, life and sport has been an obstacle race, an endless series of high jumps, long jumps, barriers and hurdles. They have had to overcome preclusion, prejudice and poverty – and their sports opponents. A glimpse at the 'unnatural' places of living and at the bizarre rules under which they have lived explains how many could not then, and cannot even now, get to the starting line.

There are few places more 'unnatural' or where more 'bizarre rules' are imposed on Aborigines and others than in the Northern Territory. After reading Obstacle Race I felt that to understand the complex inter-relationship between sport, race and

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7 Ibid., 29.
community identity I needed to contextualise it in the broader sport and social history. To my surprise, it became apparent that although there were some Australian sport histories that made brief references to the Northern Territory, none focused on it specifically.

The Northern Territory is justifiably proud of its sporting heritage and its cosmopolitan cast. The Role Models, and Northern Territory Sports Hall of Champions illustrate the cultural diversity of Territory sports and its champions drawn from Aboriginal, Australian, South East Asian and European backgrounds. A striking aspect of these lists of champions is the number who claim Aboriginal heritage. In 2000, Colin and Paul Tatz published Black Gold: The Aboriginal and Islander Sports Hall of Fame. Of the 172 inductees, twenty-nine came from the Northern Territory. The names of David Kantilla, Michael Ahmatt, Maurice Rioli, Michael Long, and Nova Perris are recognised Australia wide. Significantly, in all of these roll calls of champions, only Reuben Cooper was born in the nineteenth century, in 1898; the majority of ‘champions’ gained prominence after World War II. There are no references to sport in the Northern Territory prior to the introduction of Australian football in Darwin in 1916 (once called Australian Rules and hereafter referred to as football). Given the central place that sport holds in the Australian collective imagination, and the contribution that Northern Territory Aboriginal athletes have made to Australia’s sporting heritage, it is remarkable that so little of its history is documented: even less is subject to academic research.

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8 Barbara Vos, ed. The Role Models: Steve Abala Top End Sporting Role Models (Darwin: The Office of the Administrator, 2006). Steve Abala was the son of Barney McGinness, a key figure in Darwin’s football history discussed in Chapter 7.
9 NTG, Department of Sport and Recreation, Northern Territory Sports Hall of Champions, unpublished manuscript, Darwin, 1998.
11 Ahmatt is the preferred spelling in this case. Tatz, Black Gold, 21. Ah Mat is more common in Darwin. See footnote 106, on page 59.
David Wiggins, in *Glory Bound*, uses the phrase ‘from plantation to playing field’ to describe the slow journey Black Americans took to achieve recognition in American sport. Tatz saw the journey of Aborigines as the reverse. ‘Aborigines began with an element of freedom — and became prisoners of the protection-segregation system later.’ Although the Northern Territory introduced a protection-segregation system later than in Australia’s states, this did not translate into a longer period of freedom. To the contrary, the legislative void created by the South Australian administration of the Northern Territory until 1911 was filled by an informal but all-pervasive regime of ‘pacification’, dispossession and oppression intensified by Federation in 1901 and the adoption of the White Australia Policy. When the Commonwealth took control of the Northern Territory in 1911, the administrative surveillance and control over the non-White population tightened. An increasingly institutionalised and bureaucratised regime of state control was imposed over all aspects of their lives. Historian Ann McGrath describes the disastrous result of such Aboriginal policies. ‘Through warfare, protection, preservation and assimilation policies, they tried to render Aboriginal culture alien in its own country.’ Sport was an important means of social manipulation and control and provided an important social framework for this process. Aborigines and other non-Whites were excluded from almost all involvement in sport or were only permitted to participate under strict conditions. Freedom to participate in sport in the Northern Territory came late and was hard fought. The struggle for recognition and the right to participate in sport are the key issues explored. Were the obstacles to Aborigines and other non-Whites to participate in sport greater or different to those in other parts of Australia? How could they participate in sport at all in such a society? How did they overcome and succeed in sport in the face of poverty, oppression, bigotry and discrimination?

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Guiding Themes and Theories

Sport effectively illuminates social, political and cultural values from all eras and occupies a central place in Australia’s social and cultural landscape. Sport is often portrayed as a mirror of society but it is now widely recognised that ‘sport does not merely reflect other social and political processes: it is an active and powerful agent informing social and cultural values.’15 Jeremy MacClancy, argues that sport may be used to fill a plethora of functions: to define more sharply the already established boundaries of moral and political communities; to assist in the creation of new social identities: to give physical expression to certain social values and to act as means of reflecting those values; to serve as potentially contested space by opposed groups. … sports are vehicles and embodiments of meaning, whose status and interpretation is continually open to negotiation and subject to conflict.16

Sport is an integral part of society and cannot be examined in isolation. I focus not only on sport itself, the competition and competitors, but also its formal organisation and the social activities related to it. Racial conflict is a constant in Northern Territory social history and sport itself was, and remains, contested racial terrain17 that cannot be understood without reference to power relationships. MacClancy’s positioning of sport as a central rather than a marginal social agent is an important underpinning concept for this research.18 J A Mangan’s contention that there are ‘a multiplicity of agents of contact, distinct phases of contact, degrees of contact,

18 MacClancy, Sport, Identity and Ethnicity, 17.
varying means of contact and various methods of contact” is abundantly supported by the experience of Northern Territory sport from 1869 to 1953. The period examined in this study broadly encompasses the evolution of sport from racial segregation to integration, that parallels permanent White settlement in 1869, until the passing of the Welfare Ordinance in 1953. Although the Welfare Ordinance 1953 was not the end of restrictive Commonwealth Aboriginal legislation, it was an important social and political landmark that corresponds with the end of racial segregation in Darwin football and the beginning of greater integration of sport throughout the Territory.

Stuart Hall’s analysis of representations and Benedict Anderson’s concept of imagined communities are two important related themes in considering how White settlers established and maintained a British colonial society in the Northern Territory. Anderson developed his concept in the context of evolving European nationalism and nation states in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. He identifies ‘nation-ness’ and nations as imagined communities, cultural artifacts with profound emotional legitimacy that distil complex historical forces into a ‘modular’ form that can be transported and adapted to a great variety of social terrains. In applying the concept of imagined communities to the Northern Territory, I have placed the emphasis upon sport as a primary element in constructing and supporting the social, emotional and moral legitimacy of colonial outposts and establishing and maintaining social ‘distance’ and control. An important part in the construction of British Imperial imagined communities was idealising their inhabitants. This vision

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21 Ibid., 4.
was based on Social Darwinism and other nineteenth century racialised social theories developed by Whites that reduced non-Whites to stereotypical binary extremes to justify and sustain their own importance in the social order. Hall describes how representations constructed and supported White settler society:

> It sets up a symbolic frontier between the 'normal' and the 'deviant'...what belongs and what does not or is 'Other', between 'insiders' and 'outsiders', Us and Them. It facilitates the 'binding' or bonding together of all of Us who are 'normal' into one 'imagined community'; and it sends into symbolic exile all of Them — ‘the Others’ — who are in some way different — ‘beyond the pale’.  


Sport was an important symbolic boundary and ensured that White settlers could maintain social distance even in their leisure, although the boundaries were not impenetrable.

Sports played an important role in the formation of colonial imagined communities although modern sport itself was a relatively recent development of the latter half of the nineteenth century. This was a time of enormous social, economic and political change and saw an ‘efflorescence of invented rites’, including sport. These influences converged on the Northern Territory in this period. Eric Hobsbawm argued that sport combined the social and political element of invented traditions. In an evocative analogy, readily applicable to the sports of colonial Northern Territory society, he identified the symbolic ritualistic nature of ‘invented traditions’ as being capable of ‘being read’ in the manner of a strip cartoon. The analogy is useful when considering the context in which these concepts were literally ‘played’ out. In an environment where British White settlers and the local population did not

26 Ibid., 306.
share language or culture, the physical aspects of their interactions in the ‘contact zone’ were most obvious.

The ‘contact zone’ is a concept developed by Mary Louise Pratt that refers to ‘the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict.’²⁷ It is a space where people from very different cultures meet and often clash but although separated by culture and language in asymmetrical power relations they have to develop a co-presence.²⁸ The contact zone was a contested space where conflict and confrontations were continually negotiated and interpreted.²⁹ It was an ambiguous ephemeral zone full of dialectical contradictions. Among the most hotly contested spaces in this zone were the sporting events that brought different races together in a dynamic that differed markedly from the everyday routine. Sport, similarly to other rites and festivals, suspended or altered time, space and social conventions to transform them into a special event, an alternative theatre or forum.³⁰ Like all theatre, it is the public nature of sport that gives it symbolic significance. As contested racial terrain, it acts as a means to establish and maintain social hegemonies while at the same time providing a vehicle to challenge and resist social control.³¹ The racetrack, the town oval, the rifle range

²⁸ Ibid., 7.
and picnics were all important contact zones in Northern Territory development and important ‘repositories of the past, holding history in their contours and textures.’

A cornerstone of British colonialism was a strict socio-racial hierarchy underpinned by a construction of White superiority. The small White community, anxious about its position, was close-knit and exclusive. In northern Australia, the socio-racial hierarchy had a distinctive character compared with southern colonies. By the turn of the twentieth century, the complicated hierarchy was well established and understood by all. Although based on Broome, in north Western Australia, Susan Sickert’s description of its social hierarchy is indicative of northern Australia generally.

There were class distinctions within each nationality as well as racial distinctions that impacted on the whole community. At the very bottom of this hierarchy were the Aboriginal people who had become outcasts in their own land. Next were the bulk of the indentured Asian men, mixed race people and other poorly paid workers. Then came the Asian merchants, the indentured divers and tenders, and some of the mixed race population who had citizenship rights or, in the case of women, had married foreign men. At the top were the Europeans, small in number but dominant in power. There was some social interaction between Aboriginal women and indentured Asian men, but the bosses and other powerful whites did not (apart from business and clandestine night-time visits) associate or socialise with other races.

Sickert alludes to one symbolic boundary of the contact zone that was often the first to be crossed and then continually recrossed, despite the social taboos and stigma:

32 Purbrick, ‘Introduction: Sites, Representations, Histories,’ 2. Picnics, while not sports themselves often included impromptu sporting activities.
34 Susan Sickert, Beyond the Lattice: Broome’s Early Years (Freemantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2003), 53.
sex. As Robert Young observed in Colonial Desire, ‘sexuality was the spearhead of racial contact’.35 Nothing highlighted and threatened the maintenance of social distance and order more than the progeny that resulted from inter-racial relationships. Mary Douglas argued that the ‘other’ becomes even more threatening when symbolic boundaries between social groups merge, to ‘float ambiguously in some unstable, dangerous, hybrid zone of indeterminacy in-between.’36 Mixed race, ‘hybrid’ or ‘poly-ethnic’ communities were a dangerous contradiction that threatened the imagined British colonial society and the White Australia Policy, which was at the heart of Australia’s national identity at federation. In recent years, the multi-racial communities of north Australia have become the focus of a distinctive historical dynamic. Henry Reynolds,37 Regina Ganter,38 Julia Martinez39 and Peta Stephenson40 explore the complex inter-relationships between European, Aboriginal and Asian populations in northern Australian that created ‘a network of marginalised people whose collective memory constituted a distinctive multicultural vector in a predominantly white society.’41 This research has highlighted that, although conflict and difference were essential to the maintenance of colonial imagined communities, they convey only a partial understanding of a society that was also characterised by hybridisation, accommodation and adaption. As publicly contested social terrain, sport is an important means of monitoring and understanding how these complex interrelationships converged and developed. This is particularly so in Darwin where Australian football became an important vehicle for a ‘hybrid’, multi-racial

36 Ibid., 238.
40 Stephenson, The Outsiders Within.
41 Ibid., 3.
population to assert itself, challenge and resist racial stereotypes and forge a new identity.

The role sport plays in the formation and maintenance of identity is widely acknowledged. It acts as a vehicle in the development of multiple and complex identities at individual, ethnic and national levels. Paul Gilroy interpreted sport as a ‘cipher’, an important way to claim moral and political terrain. It allows its meanings to be negotiated and contested, and may have both positive and negative effects. Douglas Booth and Tatz are amongst many who have identified the paradoxical nature of sport and its innate ability to both connect and differentiate individuals or groups at the same time. Sport’s enigmatic character sustains its popular appeal and its capacity to both reinforce and subvert allows different groups to appropriate it, negotiate its meaning and make it their own. Where the most profound state and civil conflict is found, sport becomes increasingly politicised terrain and has the greatest implications for the development of identity.

In the Northern Territory, the most profound conflict was found on the colonial frontier. Since 1893, when Fredrick Jackson Turner first published ‘The Significance of the Frontier in American History’, the frontier, which he defined as, ‘the meeting point between savagery and civilisation’, the environment and their influence on the national character have been the subjects of historical debate. In the first half of the twentieth century, Australia’s traditional historical narrative, described by Bain

45 MacClancy, Sport, Identity and Ethnicity, 11.
Attwood as ‘settler history-making’, described this tradition as one of triumphant British progress, civilisation and nation-building by stoic explorers and pioneers who pushed back the frontier and in doing so, tamed and transformed a strange and wild land. Aborigines had only a minor role in this history as a savage and primitive race that wandered the land, incapable of adapting to White civilisation and doomed to fade from the landscape. In 1968, W E H Stanner coined the phrase ‘the great Australian silence’ to characterise the way this traditional historical narrative portrayed Aborigines in Australian history. Gradually a ‘new Australian history’ emerged that challenged the traditional history with one that was more complex and problematical. The call for new history resulted in many histories that focused on relationships between Black and White on the colonial frontier, which often resulted in violence. Sport has rarely featured in these histories but is an essential part of this study.

The frontier was never distant in the Territory. Its influence and character permeated society, regardless of where people lived, well into the twentieth century. It is one aspect of Territory social history that has attracted considerable attention because of its far-reaching impact. The frontier magnified cultural differences between the White settlers and Aborigines. In the struggle to possess the land, the gross inequalities in power often resulted in a violent response. Unlike other Australian colonies, the frontier did not recede in the face of an increasing White population, but was a constant presence, particularly during the South Australian administration from 1869 to 1911. The frontier was characterised by extreme racism that gave Aborigines few choices. In the face of violent ‘pacification’ campaigns by pastoralists, sanctioned by government inaction, they could resist, try to hide in their country or ‘come in’ to the relative safety of the pastoral stations or the margins of White settlements. In this environment, horseracing was almost the only public sport outside Palmerston until 1911.

47 Bain Attwood, Telling the Truth About Aboriginal History (Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 2005), 15.
48 Ibid.
Power relationships changed radically in Darwin with the establishment and growth of the trade union movement from 1911. The advent of unions saw a transformation from a colonial social, economic and political hegemony dominated by civil servants and a small White merchant group to one based on class allegiances. During the period 1914 to 1939, Darwin developed a reputation for ‘Bolshevism’ and a tightly controlled union workforce. Although Northern Territory unions barred Aborigines and other non-Whites from membership until the late 1920s, Darwin’s demographics meant that for union survival this was unsustainable. An increasingly assertive and political ‘Coloured’ community claimed its rights and demanded that these be acknowledged. There is a close symmetry between the gradual rise in non-White union membership in Darwin and the fight for sporting equality during the 1920s. Following World War II, the union movement and the struggle for human rights, led by the Darwin Half-caste Progressive Association, became inextricably aligned. Their activism played an important role in the removal of the despised Aboriginals Ordinance, the introduction of the Welfare Ordinance in 1953 and the racial integration of Darwin football.

In a society that privileged White settler identity and images in the written record, ‘outsiders’ and the multi-racial community had to rely on ‘a hybrid archive — oral, visual, performative’ to sustain an alternative version of history that was also a ‘protest against the “hygiene” of the white story-telling tradition.’ Sport is an important part of the alternative hybrid archival repertoire and an essential means of developing identity. In the Northern Territory, in the absence of a substantive documented history, the accepted version of sport history that emerges in the twentieth century is enshrined in the multi-cultural community’s collective or social memory, sustained by a strong oral tradition. While this provides a rich vein of evidence, social memory is not a record of past events but a reconstruction of them that always has a political dimension. According to James Fentress and Chris

50 Stephenson, The Outsiders Within, 98.
Wickham, social memory (also known as collective memory, public memory or popular memory)\(^{51}\) is a reconstruction that reflects those memories, shared experiences and images that have a particular importance to social groups today.\(^{52}\) Gary Osmond argued that ‘various forms of social memory stand as landmarks of identity, with different and sometimes contested contemporary meanings in a variety of geographic and social contexts … All representations are open to individual, multiple and changing interpretations.’\(^{53}\)

There is no doubt that sport history provides important landmarks in Northern Territory social memory. However, contrary to Osmond’s contention, its representation is remarkably consistent and uncontested in relation to Darwin’s football origins and the claims it makes for Aboriginal ownership of the game. Daniel Nathan used the concept of narrative physics that provides an important touchstone for parts II and III of this thesis and its overall structure. Narrative physics is based on the notion that an untold story tends to stay untold, whereas an often told story tends to be repeated.\(^{54}\) Narrative physics is at play in Northern Territory sport history where sports grounds were sites of continuous social contest, memory and meaning.\(^{55}\)

**Theoretical Framework**

J W C Cumes’ *Their Chastity was not too Rigid: Leisure Times in Early Australia*, was an early inspiration for this thesis. He noted that ‘perhaps a society reveals itself as much by the way it plays as by the way it works.’\(^{56}\) Cumes advocated that

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\(^{53}\) Osmond, ‘Nimble Savages’, 359.


\(^{55}\) Ibid., 221.

Historians provide an integrated picture of society by focusing not only on its economic, administrative, legal and political dimensions, ‘but also the ways in which the people relaxed when the booms burst, the battles had been fought and their democratic duty had been done. From this integrated picture, something clearer might emerge of what made a people great — or small.’ The Northern Territory had more busts than booms, more than its fair share of battles and conflict. Its citizens took their democratic duty seriously but this did not stop the Commonwealth rescinding most of their democratic rights from 1911 to 1923.

Bearing in mind Cumes’s advice to historians to provide an integrated picture of society, an adequate contextual framework that allows a flexible approach to the complexities of Northern Territory social history is required. Questions of the epistemological foundations of sport history are the subject of considerable recent debate, pitting ‘traditionalists’ against ‘postmodernists’. The debate, while at times heated, is important in forcing reflection. In relation to the Northern Territory’s sport history and the absence of previous studies, the postmodern emphasis on the ‘doubt’ of any method or theory resonates strongly. Laurel Richardson, in Murray Phillip’s introduction to Deconstructing Sport History: A postmodern Analysis provided a good summary:

> The core of postmodernism is the doubt than any method or theory, discourse or genre, tradition or novelty, has a universal and general claim as the ‘right’ or privileged form of authoritative knowledge. Postmodernism suspects all truth claims as masking and serving particular interests in local, cultural, and political struggles. But it does not automatically reject conventional methods of knowing and telling as false and archaic.

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57 Ibid., ix.
58 The Darwin Town Council, formed in 1915, continued during this period.
The extent to which conventional or postmodern epistemology influences this research is reflected by the references throughout.

Douglas Booth’s *The Field* is the most recent study to examine and define the debate. He adopted a framework from Alun Munslow and Keith Jenkins that places histories into three genres: reconstructionists, constructionists and deconstructionists. He argued reconstructionists and constructionists dominate sport history:

Disciples of these models privilege empirical methods, accept historical evidence as proof that they can recover the past, and insist that their forms or representation are transparent enough to ensure objectivity of the observations. The key difference between reconstructionists and constructionists is the extent to which the latter embrace the concepts of theories of others as tools to propose and explain relationships between events.60

Reconstructionists, Booth argued, oppose *a priori* knowledge because it can lead to the manipulation of evidence to fit a predetermined theory. In contrast to these more traditional approaches is the emergence of a school of deconstructionist sports historians who are ‘sceptical of an objective empirical history’ and who see history as a constituted narrative that problematises notions of moral or intellectual certainty. Deconstructionists question and challenge the view that the cognitive power of narratives emanate naturally from historical facts.61 Booth examined these three main genres through the use of explanatory paradigms which carry ‘quite specific philosophical assumptions and constitutes the framework that historians use to orientate their arguments.’62 He identified seven explanatory paradigms that are most common in sport history: traditional narrative, advocacy, comparison, causation, social change, context, and new culture.

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61 Ibid.
62 Ibid.
It is not necessary to reproduce Booth’s analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the epistemological foundations of sport history. However, the debate prompted consideration of the most appropriate framework for this thesis. To accommodate both the macro and micro aspects of this study, and in keeping with the desire to develop an integrated approach, it became apparent that the considerations were many but the task was twofold. First, in the absence of any previous research, it was important to provide a narrative overview of the development of Northern Territory sport that would provide the context for discussion. This would generally take a reconstructionist approach. Second, using a contextual explanatory paradigm, the thesis explores the social significance of sport and offers some insights into concepts and issues that emerge from the narrative. Following Booth’s suggestion, I have adopted the four principal components of Arthur Marwick’s *The Sixties* to construct this study: major forces and constraints, events, human agencies, and convergences and contingencies.63

The advantage of Marwick’s framework is that it allows the development of a broad perspective on multiple interrelated issues at both the macro and micro level. Major forces and constraints are further divided: structural, ideological and institutional. ‘Structural’ considers the geographical, economic and technological context based on the understanding that ‘favourable trends in any of these areas will promote change; a low level of technology or a backward economy will be likely to inhibit change.’64 ‘Ideological’ takes account of the prevailing political and social philosophies. ‘Institutional’ examines the system of government, justice, policing, education and formal and informal community organisations. Although a broad approach is taken to the major forces and constraints that impacted on the Northern Territory there will be a specific focus on the ideology that underpinned the institutional and legislative response to race relations. Events recognise that war, environmental disasters, political unrest and other specific significant events must affect social and cultural

64 Ibid., 24.
Human agencies acknowledge that individuals and groups all influence the course of events. In this study, unlike Marwick, the focus is on both majorities and minorities and how the changing dynamics and inter-relationships between them affect society. Convergence and contingencies is perhaps the most difficult to define but the most important in considering historical complexity. Society and history cannot be seen as static but as complex dynamic systems that are constantly changing. Contingency rejects or modifies notions of strict causality with broader, less certain organising principles that encourage more malleable narratives that can connect divergent events and theories. Consequently, it is only an understanding of the multifaceted and interdependent influences on society that enables critical analysis. These influences include but are not limited to, concepts and issues like affluence, cultural exchange, racial boundaries, social change, civil rights, resistance and conservatism, technological developments, demographic change and the economy. Particularly apt to the analysis of sport in Northern Territory society from 1869 to 1953 are cultural exchange, racial boundaries, social and demographic change, civil rights, resistance and conservatism.

The Northern Territory provides historians with some difficult issues about sources. One of the major limiting factors is the reliance on White written sources and an almost total absence of contemporary Aboriginal or other non-White sources. This silence, the almost total muting of any non-White ‘voice’ in colonial Northern Territory social history, is not a matter of chance but an important indicator of the society itself. These ‘others’ were not ‘silent’ or ‘absent’ from the social landscape. To the contrary, it was their constant presence, real or imagined, that shaped White perceptions of themselves and their home which many considered an ‘alien’ environment. Greg Denning has written on this theme and highlights the complexities of such history. ‘It means looking through the eyes of men who could

65 Ibid.
66 Ibid., 25.
67 Seymour Chatman, Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure and Fiction in Fiction and Film (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1978), 47.
68 Marwick, The Sixties, 23.
not see what they were looking at. In that there was an inevitable but wonderful
diversion. One had to pause a little to look at the seers to catch their way of seeing.’69
Developing some empathy with the chroniclers of colonial Northern Territory
history, to ‘catch their way of seeing’, is a disturbing and confronting process. White
chroniclers were not detached commentators but active participants in the
colonisation process and this, ‘Imperial adventure in Australia was played out by a
very small cast.’70 This was particularly so in colonial Northern Territory where
White observers were always in the minority in a small, isolated and closed
community.

Despite the absence of Aboriginal ‘voices’ from the colonial period, it must be
recognised that Aborigines were generally acute social historians. They memorised
an extraordinary array of concepts, themes and facts which were retained and
sustained within their community through oral testimony, bark or sand drawings and
paintings, song and dance. These memories record a more accurate account of the
broad reality of Aboriginal experience than do the technicalities of White
documentary evidence, but it must be understood that these memories go beyond
their literal meaning.71 As the research entered the twentieth century, Aboriginal and
other source material became more diverse and a multiplicity of voices materialised.
Although oral testimony is not without its own problems, discussed above in relation
to social memory, a more complete picture of Australian football in the period 1911
to 1953 emerges. Nevertheless, it must be acknowledged that the reliance on
European sources means that the thesis is an incomplete history. I hope that this
study may prompt further complementary research reflecting the Northern
Territory’s diverse community and new perspectives and ways of seeing these events
will emerge.

71 Heather Goodall, ‘Aboriginal History and the Politics of Information Control,’ Oral History
Review of Sources: Northern Territory Sport History

If, as Greg Denning suggests, historians are ‘scavengers of other peoples' findings,’ then there are only very slim pickings indeed on which to base this research. This review outlines the limited literature and other sources currently available directly related to Northern Territory sport history from 1869 to 1953.

In general, Australian sport histories have ignored the Northern Territory or given it only perfunctory attention. John Daly’s *Elysian Fields: Sport Class and Community in Colonial South Australia 1836–1890*, an important source to contextualise this thesis, simply ignored the fact the Northern Territory was part of South Australia. Colin Tatz’s *Obstacle Race*, also essential to understanding issues of race and sport, made no mention of Northern Territory sport prior to 1916. Richard Cashman’s *Paradise of Sport* devoted two paragraphs to colonial horseracing in the Territory relying on David Headon’s journal article and Xavier Herbert’s *Capricornia*, a work of fiction.

Horseracing from 1869 to 1911 has attracted more attention than other colonial sport. Pearl Ogden and Lorraine Dale both provide chronological narratives of horseracing in Darwin and Alice Springs respectively. Relying on contemporary

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72 Denning, Readings/Writings, 20.
73 John Daly, *Elysian Fields: Sport Class and Community in Colonial South Australia 1836–1890* (Adelaide: Daly, 1982).
74 Tatz, Obstacle Race.
76 Xavier Herbert, *Capricornia* (Sydney: Harper Collins, 2002). Although *Capricornia* is a novel it is one of the most oft quoted works on Northern Territory history. It is also claimed that its lead character, Norman Shillingsworth, is modelled upon Reuben Cooper and/or Val McGinness, important protagonists in the Northern Territory’s football history. See John Mulvaney, *Paddy Cahill of Oenpelli* (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2004), 14; See also, Frances De Groen and Laurie Hergenhan, eds. *Xavier Herbert: Letters* (Brisbane: University of Queensland Press, 2002), 75.
77 Pearl Ogden, *The Darwin Cup: 120 Years Racing in the Northern Territory* (Darwin: The Author, 2002).
newspapers and personal reminiscences, they are intended as entertaining overviews for a non-academic audience and are not referenced. Headon’s article\(^79\) focused on horseracing between 1870 and 1900. The emphasis was on the ‘wild and woolley’ [sic] nature of the Territory and the ‘motley race crowd, eccentric behaviour, comical happenings, riotous excess and conspicuous surfeit of alcohol’\(^80\). Although Headon discussed the ‘seamier side of racing,’\(^81\) betting losses and rigged races, the stress is on the ‘colourful’ characters and events. Despite horseracing events acting as an annual public social indicator of race relations in the Territory, Headon contradictorily pointed to the ‘egalitarian nature of these meetings’ while also observing that ‘racism thrived’\(^82\) and made little comment on how this reflected society generally.

Belinda Hammond traced the history of Palmerston regattas and briefly considers White ‘society’, and the role that regattas played in maintaining and displaying British sporting culture.\(^83\) Two of my own publications, written in the early phases of research for this thesis, represent the first attempts to provide an overview of the development of Northern Territory sport and leisure and some analysis of their role in race relations from 1869 to 1911.\(^84\)

The history of Australian football during the Commonwealth administration, from 1911 to 1953, receives greater attention than sport during the South Australian period. Recent national histories released in the game’s 150\(^{th}\) year only make brief mention of Northern Territory football. Bernard Whimpress’s outline of the

\(^79\) Headon, ‘To See a Racecourse Become a Pandemonium,’137–151.
\(^80\) Ibid., 139.
\(^81\) Ibid.
\(^82\) Ibid., 141.
development of football around Australia in Geoff Slattery’s *The Australian Game*,
relied largely on an unpublished paper by myself.\(^{85}\) Hess, et. al.,\(^{86}\) drew its cursory
overview of Territory football from secondary sources by Susannah Ritchie
(discussed below),\(^{87}\) and Jack Frawley.\(^{88}\) As a result, the origin ‘myth’ of Darwin
and Tiwi Island football is perpetuated but the central focus of Frawley’s discussion,
that Tiwi football transcends sport to become something much more — a football
ceremony — an integral part of the Islands’ cultural life is ignored.\(^{89}\) The centrality
of football in the social and cultural life of many Aboriginal communities is
celebrated in photographic essays by Marlow,\(^{90}\) and David Moodie, (ed.).\(^{91}\) Although
these publications include some historical information, they are not referenced and
are not intended as football histories. The emphasis of Tatz’s *Obstacle Race* was on
analysis of the macro-level racism, social trends, and civil rights rather than an
attempt to detail the history of particular places but it does draw upon some Territory
episodes and individuals from the late 1920s onwards. The chapter ‘High Hurdles’
featured brief case studies of the Darwin Buffaloes and St Marys football teams
following the ‘official liberation of “half-castes”’ that accompanied the Welfare
Ordinance 1953.\(^{92}\) ‘Sport and Survival’ discusses the ‘gross inequality of chances,
choices and facilities’ that exists in many Northern Territory Aboriginal
communities.\(^{93}\)

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\(^{85}\) Bernard Whimpress, ‘The Game Spreads’, in *The Australian Game of Football since 185*, Geoff
Slattery, ed. (Docklands: Geoff Slattery Publishing, 2008), 68–69. See also Matthew Stephen,
‘Reuben Cooper, Social Memory and Australian Rules Football in Darwin, 1916–1939’, unpublished

\(^{86}\) Rob Hess, Matthew Nicholson, Bob Stewart, and Gregory De Moore, eds. *A National Game: The
History of Australian Rules Football* (Melbourne: Viking/Penguin Group, 2008), 171.

\(^{87}\) Susannah Ritchie, ‘From Absence to All-Stars: An Exploration into the Australian Rules Football


\(^{89}\) Ibid., 169.

\(^{90}\) Jesse Marlow, *Centre Bounce: Football from Australia’s Heart* (Melbourne: Hardie Grant Books,
2003).

\(^{91}\) Moodie, ed. *Tiwi Footy Yiloga*.


\(^{93}\) Ibid., 297.
Tatz, featured Northern Territory Aboriginal champions inducted into the Aboriginal and Islander Sports Hall of Fame, most of whom came to the fore after 1930.94 Similarly, Barbara Vos’s The Role Models was a series of sporting biographies of Darwin sporting champions from 1947 to 2006, with the majority coming from non-White backgrounds.95

David Lee and Michael Barfoot’s history of the Northern Territory Football League (NTFL),96 and Frank McPherson’s, history of rugby league97 were chronological narratives and statistical overviews of their respective sports that offer very little critical commentary on race relations prior to the Welfare Ordinance 1953. Australian football during the inter-war period is the most thoroughly researched period of Darwin sport history although sport is not always the primary research focus. Julia Martinez’s doctoral thesis included a chapter that explored the links between the union movement, football and the emergent Coloured community.98 Martinez further examined the ‘complexity of ethnic identity and inter-ethnic connections’ that revolved around Darwin football, during the 1920s and 1930s in her contribution in Lost in the Whitewash.99 Regina Ganter also explored similar themes with a specific focus on Asian-Aboriginal contact in north Australia.100 Arguably the most important contribution to Northern Territory football history is Susannah Ritchie’s recent honours thesis.101 It viewed Australian football as a site of

95 Barbara Vos, ed. The Role Models.
97 Frank McPherson, Rugby League in the Northern Territory: The First Fifty Years, (Darwin: NTUniprint, 2003), 8–9.
98 Martinez, ‘Plural Australia’.
100 Regina Ganter, Mixed Relations: Asian-Aboriginal Contact in North Australia (Perth: University of Western Australia Press, 2006).
101 Ritchie, ‘From Absence to All-Stars.’
continuous social and political contest and a window into Darwin society and culture. It is a well-constructed, thorough and detailed analysis of issues of race and identity that argued that football was an important agent of change and the football field an essential transformative space.

From the 1920s onwards, oral history becomes a critical source in Darwin’s football history. The problematic nature of using oral history as a historical source is discussed elsewhere in this thesis. Suffice to say that in Darwin, where football, family, race and politics are inextricably linked, disentangling myth, truth and fiction can be particularly fraught. My 2007 article used oral testimonies and contemporary newspaper reports to examine the role of football in community identity and provided new evidence on the Territory’s first Aboriginal footballers and the racial divisions that continually disrupted Darwin football between 1926 and 1942. Buffalo Legends, a film by Paul Roberts and Des Raymond, augments the football literature. Intended for television, the documentary depicted the version of Darwin’s football history retained in its social memory, which portrayed the Vesteys and Darwin Buffaloes Football Clubs as the champions of Darwin’s Coloured community and leaders in the fight against institutional racism during the inter-war years. I show that the history is more complex than the oral testimony usually portrays and illuminates hitherto unknown events, individuals and their contribution to the struggle for recognition and rights.

This research has made extensive use of contemporary newspaper reports. The Northern Territory Times and Gazette (1873–1932) (hereafter referred to as The Times), The North Australian (1883–1889), Northern Standard (1921–1942, 1945–1954), and The Northern Territory News (1952–) all provided detailed weekly

102 In my current employment as Manager, Oral History Unit, Northern Territory Archives Service, I continuously hear oral testimony related to football across the Northern Territory.
accounts of sport and sportsmen and enable an accurate chronology of sport to be constructed.\textsuperscript{105}

Photographs are used throughout the study. Although they are \textit{prima facie} evidence, they can also be read as ambiguous texts that require careful interrogation, corroboration and contextualisation.\textsuperscript{106} The production of photographs prior to 1911 is almost always in the hands of Whites. They represent a visual social hierarchy with themselves at the centre and ‘others’ on the periphery symbolising their construction of the world.\textsuperscript{107} As colonial artefacts, they pose important questions of ‘cultural meaning and colonial surveillance’\textsuperscript{108}. From the 1920s, the authorship of photographs is more ambiguous and Aboriginal and Asian sportsmen increasingly become the focus. Many of the photographs, particularly those of Darwin football during World War I, provide important evidence of non-White participation that augments, and at times contradicts, the documentary evidence and/or oral testimony. While many of the photographs are a demonstration and reiteration of the British cultural bonds between the Northern Territory and other colonial contexts, they often reveal more. They illustrate the constant ‘presence’ of Aborigines and ‘others’ at sporting and social events that could be easily overlooked if one were reliant on documentary evidence alone. Captions play an important role in interpreting photographs. Bale describes captions as ‘among the most potent forms of writing surrounding photographs … that serve to guide the reader or suggest one of several possible meanings.’\textsuperscript{109} For clarity, I have identified the source of the captions to

\begin{itemize}
  \item \textsuperscript{105} See appendices for details.
  \item \textsuperscript{106} Booth, \textit{The Field}, 103.
  \item \textsuperscript{108} Gary Osmond, ‘Reflecting Materiality: Reading Sport History Through the Lens’, \textit{Rethinking History} 12, no. 3 (September 2008): 7.
  \item \textsuperscript{109} Bale, ‘Partial Knowledge’, 106–107.
\end{itemize}
distinguish between contemporary texts on the images themselves, captions provided by archival sources and/or additional information or comment by myself.\textsuperscript{110}

**Thesis Structure**

I provide a narrative overview of the development of sport in the Northern Territory from 1869 to 1953 and use a study of sport to analyse issues of race and identity in Territory society. I adopt the concept of narrative physics to provide the overall narrative structure of the thesis, which has three parts. The notions of an ‘untold story’ and an ‘often told story’ are particularly pertinent to the history of sport of the Northern Territory. Part I broadly considers the major forces, constraints and events that form the historical backdrop to the thesis. It sets out the context to analyse the development of sport in more detail taking account of the human agencies, convergence and contingencies outlined in parts II and III.

The Untold Story (Part II) examines the development of sport during the South Australian Government administration from 1869 to 1911. It traces the establishment of sport and the role that it played in sustaining a British community in Australia’s isolated tropical north. It examines the short-lived sporting ‘freedom’ for Aborigines during the initial years of White settlement followed by the ascendency of\textit{homo ludens imperiosus}, the archetypal British sportsman and his associated institutions who manipulated sport as a means of social control and domination. Underpinned by Social Darwinism, White occupation and settlement was a ‘struggle for existence in the north of white against black, brown and yellow, a tussle among races for possession of the Australian tropics’.\textsuperscript{111} Consequently, Aborigines, Chinese and ‘others’ were marginalised from sport and kept at a ‘safe’ social distance. Nowhere was the struggle for existence more desperate than on the Northern Territory frontier. Here White settlers believed they were in a war for the possession of the land that

\textsuperscript{110} Captions from archival sources are in \textit{plain text}. Contemporary text from the photographs/postcards is \textit{italicised}. Additional information provided by myself is in \textit{[brackets]}.  

often resulted in severe racial violence and conflict. In this environment, sport was almost non-existent, confined almost exclusively to horseracing in the small and isolated White communities of Alice Springs, Borroloola and the Victoria River District. Horseracing was a ‘trophy moment’ for White frontiersmen and an important marker in frontier race relations and White ‘progress’. In Palmerston and the northern goldfields, the racial violence was less deadly but just as oppressive. Despite this, around the turn of the twentieth century Aboriginal sportsmen began to emerge as important agents of social change. Although rare, they found ways to challenge the racial caste barriers, subvert the stereotypes, assert their independence and to lay claim to the sports arena.

The Often Told Story (Part III) shifts the focus to a case study of Australian football in Darwin under the Commonwealth administration from 1911 to 1953, to consider the changing nature of race and identity. The Commonwealth immediately imposed the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911 that marked the beginning of a regime of administrative surveillance, control and regulation of Aborigines that would not begin to ease until 1953. Darwin experienced great social and political change during World War I. The construction of Vesteys Meatworks in 1914 caused a population explosion in Darwin that resulted in the rise of the union movement and the introduction of the new sports of boxing and football. When football was established in 1916 it immediately captured the public imagination. It was the first sport to regularly include non-White players in games, a trend that would increase in pace after the war but also lead to controversy. The growing involvement of Coloured players in football began to threaten the White control of sport. In the 1920s White racial paranoia became extreme in fear they would be overrun by a hybrid ‘coloured’ race.112 The complete breakdown of race relations resulted in the imposition of a colour bar in football between December 1926 and December 1929. The colour bar acted as the catalyst for the Coloured community to directly challenge the oppressive regime imposed on them by the Aboriginals Ordinance on and off the field

throughout the 1930s at a time when Darwin grew as Australia’s northern defence hub.

World War II impacted on Darwin like no other part of Australia and this too was reflected in football. In its aftermath the NTFL lifted its racial segregation and Black players joined the league for the first time. The gradual racial integration of the football league occurred during a period of continuous political pressure on the newly formed Northern Territory Legislative Council and the Commonwealth government by the union movement in collaboration with the Coloured community to remove the oppressive restrictions of the Aboriginals Ordinance. This struggle was marked by, but by no means finished, with the introduction of the Welfare Ordinance in 1953, and operative from May 1957. Although the Coloured community was liberated from the control of the Ordinance, the situation of the Black population, declared state wards, remained unchanged until the 1960s.
Chapter 1 The Northern Territory: The Historical Context

Among north Australian historians there is a sense that Australian history too often takes an eastern seaboard, Eurocentric perspective that marginalises the north. W E H Stanner wrote in 1967 that ‘in many ways the history of the Territory was the same as the history of parts and times of the east and south. You hear little of this in the works of most historians, and I have a quarrel with them on that account.’¹ In recent years there has been a renewed interest in the region’s history. In North of Capricorn, Henry Reynolds recognises northern Australia history’s distinctive dynamic. ‘The tension between history, culture and identity on the one hand, and geography on the other, was always most apparent in North Australia. It was here that geography threatened to engulf history.’² Regina Ganter also advocates a new historical focus, one written chronologically from north to south; this would reposition and emphasise Australia’s northern history and relationships with its nearest neighbours.³

This is a broad contextual backdrop for the discussion and analysis of Northern Territory sport that follows.⁴ In keeping with Marwick’s historical contextual framework, the emphasis is on the principal components of major forces and constraints and events. It is not intended as a comprehensive social, economic or political history of the Northern Territory.

² Reynolds, North of Capricorn, viii.
The Physical Environment

The Northern Territory is vast, 1.35 million square kilometres, the size of France, Germany and the United Kingdom combined. Home to only 219,900 people, it is one of the least densely populated regions of Australia. The people and the environment have a visceral relationship shaped by the extremes of the tropical north and the deserts of the south. The Territory’s harsh environment has kept it physically isolated from other Australian regions and throughout its White history, many have regarded it as Australia’s last ‘frontier’.

The Northern Territory’s boundaries were set in typically arbitrary colonial style, in almost total ignorance of the land itself. The borders were established after South Australia received Royal Letters Patent in 1863: to the north, by the Arafura Sea, to the west by 129° east longitude, to the east by 138° east longitude and to the south by 26° latitude. The geographical regions referred to in this work include the ‘Top End’, the Gulf, the Victoria River District, and Central Australia. The most significant climatic influence on the Top End is the tropical monsoon, which results in only two seasons, the Wet and the Dry. Andy McRandy, a character in Xavier Herbert’s Capricornia, described the Territory as ‘utterly useless land. You can’t grow nuthen properly on account of the climate. Dry Season it’s a desert. Wet Season it’s a lake’.

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5 Australian Bureau of Statistics, 3101.0 - Australian Demographic Statistics.
6 See map 1.
7 The Wet extends over the summer months from December to April. The amount and duration of rainfall varies and diminishes as one moves south. Darwin’s mean annual rainfall is approximately 1500mm and 90 per cent of this falls during the Wet. Aboriginal seasonal calendars may have up to six seasons. See Aboriginal Weather Knowledge [28 March 2009]
8 Herbert, Capricornia, 363.
Map 1: Northern Territory regions and major settlements 1869–1953 (Stephen, 2008)
The Social Environment

Northern Australia’s social environment prior to White occupation was rich and diverse. Norman Tindale’s Aboriginal Tribes of Australia estimated that 126 Aboriginal tribes lived in the Northern Territory.9 The date of arrival of humans in Australia is constantly under review but current evidence indicates that it was between 120,000 and 60,000 years ago.10 Estimates vary widely on the size of the pre-European Aboriginal population. Flood believes a realistic estimate for the Aboriginal population of Australia in 1788 was, at most, three-quarters of a million. She makes the point that population densities were highest in the Murray Darling River valleys and the tropical coast of Arnhem Land, with two people per square kilometre.11 Alan Powell believes that F L Jones’s estimate of the Northern Territory Aboriginal population of 35,000 in 1788 was ‘a reasonable guess’.12 Only the broadest of generalisations can be made here about pre-European contact Aboriginal society. It was a semi-nomadic hunter-gatherer society attuned to the environment with a rich spiritual and cultural life. Inga Clendinnen’s description encapsulates the complexity of the culture:

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9 Powell, Far Country, 15.
12 Powell, Far Country, 16.
They also developed steepling thought-structures — intellectual edifices so comprehensive that every creature and plant had its place within it. They travelled light, but they were walking atlases, and walking encyclopaedias of natural history. They were Scheherazades, too, because this complicated knowledge was not written down but allocated between human minds in song, dance and story. Detailed observations of nature were elevated into drama by the development of multiple and multi-level narratives; narratives which made the intricate relationships between these observed phenomena memorable. 13

Aboriginal cultural life included ample leisure time for play and games. Games for children were often imitative of adult activities and educated them in the social and physical skills necessary for later life. 14 Games were also an important part of adult lives providing a diversion from daily tasks while reinforcing important social relationships within and between groups. 15 The skills honed by hunting and games were readily adapted to imported British sports although it will be demonstrated that opportunities for inter-racial sport were severely limited.

Aboriginal culture did not develop in complete isolation. The north Australian coastal Aborigines had trade and negotiated relationships with Bugis and Macassan fishers who were regular sojourners on the northern coast from at least the eighteenth century, well before British incursions. 16 The Bugis and Macassans were traders seeking natural resources, not colonists. Over a century of economic and cultural

13 Inga Clendinnen, True Stories (Sydney: ABC Books, 1999), 54.
15 Ken Edwards, Indigenous Traditional Games (Canberra: Australian Sports Commission, 2000). Edwards continues to research Aboriginal games. A recent oral history project undertaken by the National Library of Australia and the Australian Sports Commission has confirmed that Aboriginal games continued to be played in some parts of the Northern Territory until White contact as recently as the 1940s.
exchange they may have influenced the coastal Aborigines in many ways but it did little to prepare them for permanent British occupation driven by a very different culture and ideology.¹⁷

Charles Darwin’s _On The Origin of Species_ was published in 1859, ten years prior to Palmerston’s settlement. Evolution was a revolutionary concept and fuelled scientific debate throughout the later half of the nineteenth century and continues to do so. The term ‘Social Darwinism,’ coined by the English philosopher, Herbert Spencer, was based on the notion of an evolutionary linear sequence of beings from savagery to civilisation. Blacks were at the bottom of this sequence, the most primitive, almost a fossil society, while Whites were the highest form of civilization.¹⁸ Social Darwinism underpinned imperialism essentially as an ethic of conquest, providing the basic moral justification for dispossession — those best able to exploit the land, or anything else for that matter … [and] erected an almost impenetrable barrier between the deep spirituality of Aboriginal culture and the materialism of our own new, white Australian culture.¹⁹

Although interracial conflict and violence cannot be attributed to a single factor, Social Darwinism, a construct said to derive from Darwin but certainly not developed or used by him, provided a ‘scientific’ rationale to those who saw Blacks as a barrier to ‘progress’. It reinforced perceptions of Blacks as ‘savages’ and, “‘like savages all over the world’”, they could only be subdued with violence, controlled by

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¹⁷ Stephenson, _The Outsiders Within_, 25.
terror’.\textsuperscript{20} In colonial Northern Territory there were few who did not subscribe to such views.

Local White society made every effort to recreate the imagined British imperial community, but its size and profile resulted in adaptation and compromise. I argue that the small White minority set aside the social, economic, religious and class differences that defined and differentiated many other Australian colonial societies; they favoured a more cohesive and unifying society that simplistically delineated and distanced a White ‘us’ from an alien, coloured ‘them’. The collective signs and symbols of White solidarity included exclusion, segregation and demeaning of Blacks and ‘others’ based on Social Darwinism that resulted in the belief that the elimination or domination of native societies was an inevitable, natural process.\textsuperscript{21}

The Territory shared a distinctive colonial construction of society with northern Queensland, and Western Australia that differed in scale and demographic profile to other Australian colonies. Most importantly, the White population remained a small minority until World War II.\textsuperscript{22} Unlike other Australian colonies, Whites in northern Australia could not rely on weight of numbers to overwhelm and dominate Aborigines and immigrant groups.\textsuperscript{23} The Northern Territory had very little appeal to the wealthy middle class of Britain who entered the colonial ‘gentry’ of most Australian colonies.\textsuperscript{24} F H Bauer surmised that most men who came to the North in the early years of settlement ‘were certainly not cast from the solid citizen mould … and it may be assumed that few men of real ability would come to the north

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item[22] Julie Wells, Mickey Dewar and Suzanne Perry, eds. \textit{Modern Frontier: Aspects of the 1950s in Australia’s Northern Territory} (Darwin: Charles Darwin Press, 2005). Appendix A, Table 1, 184 & Table 17, 200. The Northern Territory European population exceeded the Aboriginal population for the first time between 1947 and 1954.
\item[23] Northern Australia encompasses North Queensland, Northern Western Australian and the Northern Territory. See Reynolds, \textit{North of Capricorn}, Ganter, \textit{Mixed Relations}.
\item[24] See John A Daly, \textit{Elysian Fields}.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
The paucity of arable land meant that no wealthy landed class developed and economic circumstances conspired against White merchants and entrepreneurs, ensuring that none accumulated conspicuous wealth. There were no schools until the late 1870s, and then there was only one public elementary school in Palmerston. The few churches in Palmerston reflected prevailing attitudes and rarely challenged them. Women, seen as a ‘civilising’ influence on society, were very few in number and until World War II outnumbered by men three to one. The physical and social isolation meant that there was no basis for an educated middle class intelligentsia; in many other communities this class would have formed charitable organisations or liberal humanitarian societies that may have criticised or ameliorated the excesses of the continuous conflict and racial antagonisms towards Aborigines and other ‘aliens’. Missions were few during the South Australian administration period, and were more often criticised for ‘protecting’ Aboriginal cattle killers than praised for providing sanctuary and Christian education. Notwithstanding these factors, the general structure of British society was reproduced and although it was not as stratified or as rigid as in southern colonies, it was tight-knit and exclusive. A social hierarchy developed where White ‘society’ excluded non-Whites and determined status not so much by class but by position in the government, commerce or industry and personal ‘respectability’.

The Government Resident was the pinnacle of White society and his office gave it a recognisable social centre and leader. Although not a vice-regal position, it was the Northern Territory’s equivalent of Governor. The Government Resident lived in the ‘Residency’, the Northern Territory version of Government House. His social circle included senior government administrators, the British Australian Telegraph Company (BAT) staff, professionals such as barristers and doctors and members of

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26 Palmerston’s first public school was established in 1877. Pine Creek School was established in 1900. Barbara James, *No Man’s Land: Women of the Northern Territory* (Sydney: Collins Publishers Australia, 1989), 73.

27 Ibid., 109. In earlier periods the ratio was as high as 6:1 see James regarding the 1881 Census, 59.
the small but influential White merchant community. The BAT, established in Palmerston in September 1870 at the commencement of the Overland Telegraph, developed its own niche in Palmerston ‘Society’. The cable was a symbol of imperial civilisation and superiority and those who operated it gained a special social status. The BAT drew its officers directly from Britain or other ‘oriental’ cable stations and they were well versed in the traditions and customs of the colonial middle class and exemplified the ‘tropical Gothic’ of Britain’s far eastern empire. They gave the appearance of an exclusive gentlemen’s club rather than a workforce and conspicuously had a large staff of Chinese and Blacks who filled the roles of houseboys, maids, cleaners, gardeners, punkah operators, cooks and washerwomen. Ernestine Hill described the BAT as being ‘in ramshackle Darwin but not of it, top rung of that pathetic little social ladder with so many rungs missing and its props in coal tar.’ White society outside of Palmerston was very limited and highly dispersed. It consisted of miners, storeowners, pastoralists, stockmen and other rural workers. Life on the frontier beyond the northern goldfields was one of relentless work and struggle against the environment and often hostile Blacks and there was little time or pretence for the trappings of ‘society’.

Similar to other north Australian colonial settlements, Palmerston had a distinctively cosmopolitan population. Almost all visitors commented on the ‘Asian’ feel of the town. In 1898, Banjo Paterson wrote:

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28 The British Australian Telegraph Company was merged into the Eastern Extension and China Cable Company in 1873 but the staff were always referred to as BAT until well into the 20th century.
30 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 151.
31 Ernestine Hill, The Territory (Australia: Angus & Robertson, 1995), 126.
Palmerston is unique among Australian towns, inasmuch as it is filled with the boilings over of the great cauldron of Oriental humanity … Here are gathered together Canton coolies, Japanese pearl divers, Malays, Manilamen, Portuguese from adjacent Timor, Cingalese, Zanzibar niggers looking for billets as stokers, frail (but not fair) damsels from Kobe: all sorts of conditions of men.\(^{32}\)

Despite the importance of this diversity to the Northern Territory economy, some Whites considered the Chinese a threat. They were frequently reviled despite, or perhaps because of, the essential role they played in commerce, mining and industry. Outnumbering Whites in the nineteenth century, they were relegated to a parallel world that only intersected with White society at public celebrations like Chinese New Year, some religious festivals and occasional civic delegations. There can be little doubt that the Chinese community life was as diverse and rich as that of the Whites, but little evidence remains. The ‘Coloured’ community on the other hand, was beyond the pale for most Whites.

As Northern Territory society developed, one of the signs of its diversity and White ‘progress’ was a growing Coloured population. This prompted moral outrage and racism in the White community and was the subject of constant public commentary, as illustrated by a letter to The Times by ‘Humanity’, titled ‘The Black North’:

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Many strangers when passing here, come ashore, and perhaps for the first thing they see is a dirty black lubra, with a dirty rag pinned around her, and with a poor little shivering halfcast [sic] baby on her back. The first thought that will strike the beholder is pity for the mite of humanity; and for the second thought, no doubt, disgust at the creature who could be guilty of such a crime — for crime it must surely be considered … since such men must have lost the respect of other people … in my humble opinion some steps should be taken, if not to expose the deeds of such depraved people, to at least compel them to provide for the support and education of their offspring.  

Government officials shared ‘Humanity’s’ fears. In 1903, F Goldsmith, Chief Medical Officer, warned that the Coloured population was rising ‘and may in time become a danger to society’. This was to be a continuing theme with Chief Medical Officers and Chief Protectors until the 1950s.

Such views informed and drove social attitudes and government policy over the next fifty years. At Federation, northern Australia was considered as a challenge to White settlement and in contrast to the tamed, civilised and cultivated south eastern crescent: ‘increasingly, the tropics were marked off as a separate, racially dubious territory’. Miscegenation cast a shadow over Northern Territory society where, as in all Imperial adventures, ‘sexuality was the spearhead of racial contact’. Novelist Xavier Herbert described it as the ‘great dirty joke, black Velvet’. It deeply offended Darwin’s White society, with its pretensions to British middle-class respectability, because it threatened its cultural order and disturbed the social

33 Northern Territory Times, 31 January 1902.
35 Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 73.
36 Ronald Hyam, Empire and Sexuality: The British Experience (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1992), 211.
37 Herbert, Capricornia, 95.
boundaries it so carefully constructed by creating a mixed race who existed in a dangerously ambiguous and unstable hybrid zone: an in-between world. Any White man who entered a relationship with a Black woman was labelled a ‘combo,’ ostracised from respectable society. If the relationship resulted in Coloured children, they were ‘stereotyped as ‘morally worthless’ and ‘tainted’, supposedly possessing the 'vices' of both races, the virtues of neither and thus a 'blot' on 'civilisation', a 'sin against creation'. This was by no means a Territory invention. Sexual desire was turned into treason punishable by social and/or legal sanction throughout the world. Southern Africa and the United States of America are extreme examples of the imposition of strict laws to outlaw inter-racial cohabitation, sex and marriage. In the Territory, a combination of shame and fear that a Coloured majority would overrun the dominant White population drove an increasingly strident public and government response toward stricter racial controls and segregation.

**The South Australian Administration, 1869-1911**

Grenfell Price famously described the Northern Territory’s history up until 1930 as ‘a vast iceberg of failure, unmelted by the soft warm waters of neighbouring success.’ It is an apt description of the South Australian administration, which constantly failed to reach its own expectations. Permanent South Australian occupation of the Northern Territory was established when G W Goyder, South Australian Surveyor-General, leader of the Northern Territory Survey Expedition and Protector of Aborigines, landed at Palmerston, Port Darwin, on 5 February 1869. Initial contacts with the Larrakia, although limited, indicate that race relations in the

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38 Mary Douglas quoted in Hall, Representation, 238.
The contact zone were cautious, usually peaceful, often amiable and mutually beneficial. The spearing and subsequent death of J W O Bennett at Fred’s Pass, in March 1869, marked a turning point in relations which increasingly resembled the Australian colonial contact experience of other colonies.

The South Australian administration took on a permanent aspect in June 1870 with the arrival of Captain Bloomfield Douglas, the Government Resident. His instructions reveal that although relations with the Aborigines were a priority, they were also contradictorily conditional. Although they were recognised as ‘British Subjects’ and therefore entitled to its protection, there was a veiled threat that ‘protection’ came only by ceding their rights to British ‘authority’.

With reference to your intercourse with the natives, I cannot impress upon you too strongly the desire of the Government that the most friendly feeling should exist between the aborigines and the Europeans … You will show them that, while you are anxious to gain their good will and confidence by kindness and judicious liberality, you are able to repel, and, if necessary, to punish aggression.

In early 1870, the South Australian Government manoeuvred to ensure that the international communications cable to Australia from Java would land at Port Darwin and continue to Adelaide via an Overland Telegraph line. The Overland Telegraph provided much needed economic impetus to Northern Territory development. Survey work began in late 1870s and construction was completed in

43 The Larrakia are the traditional owners of the land upon which Darwin is built. The Larrakia response to White occupation is well documented in, Samantha Wells, ‘Negotiating Place in Colonial Darwin: Interactions between Aborigines and Whites, 1869–1911’ (PhD thesis, University of Technology Sydney, 2003).
44 Douglas was the Territory’s second Government Resident. The first was Boyle Travis Finnis, at Escape Cliffs, 20 June 1864 to 11 January 1867.
46 Ibid., 4.
August 1872. Gold discovered during the construction of the overland telegraph further stimulated the economy and the resultant ‘rush’ saw Palmerston’s White population almost double by 1872 from 192 to 357. Gold mining continued throughout the South Australian administration and was one of the few industries to yield modest profits. The main beneficiaries of gold mining were the Chinese.

Plate 2: Planting of the first pole of the Overland Telegraph at Darwin, 1st September 1871. (Unknown, NTG Lands Dept. Collection, NTL, PH 0139/0210)

The Chinese

The gold rush in the Northern Territory was small by Australian standards and hindered by the lack of cheap labour. Similar to British imperial experience elsewhere, it was believed that Whites were unsuited to manual labour in the tropics and the solution was Coloured labour. In 1874, the South Australian Government became the first in Australia to indenture Chinese labour to work in a gold province. The first group of 186 ‘coolies’ arrived from Singapore in 1874. From 1878 to 1910 the Chinese population outnumbered Europeans. Despite Northern

47 Donovan, A Land Full of Possibilities, 225.
48 Ibid., 106.
49 See Figure 1.
Territory public opposition, the South Australian Government remained ambivalent about the Chinese ‘question’ until the late 1880s. Because of the lack of White labour, most households and businesses in Darwin, as well as the mining industry, were reliant on Chinese and/or Aboriginal labour. Palmerston’s small but influential White storekeepers and merchants vociferously opposed Chinese and ‘Asiatic’ labour. They used indignant moral outrage, supposed threats to public health and racist nationalist rhetoric to agitate for greater immigration restrictions and controls on the resident Chinese.

![Northern Territory Population 1869-1911](image)

**Figure 1: Northern Territory Population 1869–1911 (source: Donovan, A Land Full of Possibilities, 172–173.)**

Legislative action was prompted by a large rise in the Chinese population during the construction of the northern section of the transcontinental railway, from Darwin to Pine Creek between 1886 and 1888. During the construction, the Chinese population grew to 6,122, outnumbering Whites 6 to 1. At the same time, White miners called for restrictions on Chinese miners. Public meetings in Palmerston in March 1886 called for the immediate imposition of a poll tax of £30 on every Chinese entering the Northern Territory. This demand was accompanied by a veiled threat that ‘we

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greatly fear that without something being done very shortly to ease this pressure, we shall be unwillingly forced into collision with the Chinese.’ The Goldfield Amendment Act was passed in September 1886, excluding Chinese from newly discovered goldfields for two years.

In January 1888, J L Parsons, the Government Resident, indicated that ‘the Chinese question has reached a very acute stage’. In response to a smallpox scare, the South Australian government declared all Chinese ports and other transit points in South East Asia ‘infected’ and imposed a twenty-one day quarantine period. Further restrictions were imposed in March 1888, when a poll tax of £10 was imposed on all Chinese arriving in the Northern Territory and a further poll tax of £10 on those crossing an imaginary line 200 miles south of Darwin. Fears of a flood of Chinese immigrants were mounting, resulting in South Australia successfully lobbying for an inter-colonial conference in Sydney in June 1888. The conference unanimously agreed to uniform measures to restrict Chinese immigration. South Australia passed the Chinese Immigration Restriction Act 1888, which included restricting landing of Chinese to one per 500 tons burden of vessels, the imposition of a permit and the repeal of the poll tax. All Chinese resident in the Northern Territory prior to the Act were exempted. A poll tax was retained on Chinese entering South Australia proper.

In 1895, the South Australian Government appointed a Commission of Enquiry to consider the Northern Territory’s mounting debt. Chinese domination of the northern goldfields was seen as a contributing cause and a new Northern Territory Gold Mining Act 1895 was introduced, effectively banning Chinese from owning mining leases. The prohibition of Chinese from new goldfields in association with the effects of the Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act 1901 resulted in a gradual decline of the Chinese population.

51 Kirwan, Uhr, and Pickford, ‘Memorial to the Government Resident Re: Chinese Poll Tax,’ 5 April 1886, GRIC, A8975, NTAS, Darwin.
54 Ibid., 58.
The Northern Territory Frontier

Alan Powell described the spread of White settlement on the Northern Territory frontier as a ‘bizarre pattern of savage racial conflict and frontier paternalism’.55 The frontier ‘contact zone’, where Black and White frequently clashed, was an ever-present influence and permeated all levels of society. In contrast to southern colonies, where colonisation overwhelmed Aboriginal nations through weight of numbers and superiority of arms, Whites in the Northern Territory remained a small minority. Although the few small towns and settlements on the frontier were relatively safe, many of the widely dispersed and isolated pastoral properties existed in a ‘siege’ mentality. The frontier was a violent and brutal place throughout the colonial period and extreme racism was integral.

There is no accurate enumeration of Aborigines killed on some parts of the frontier by Whites during the ‘wild times’.56 As Tatz points out, it is fruitless to compare atrocities,57 but an understanding of the scale of the violence and killing is essential. Although disease must be recognised as a significant killer in the Northern Territory, frontier conflict reduced Aboriginal populations. R G Kimber’s analysis of Aboriginal population loss in central Australia in the period 1860–1895 indicates nearly 40 percent died as the result of contact with Whites, killings that have been rightly defined as constituting genocide.58 In the Victoria River District between 1880 and 1939, the figure was 86.5 percent while in the Alligator River Region it was even more catastrophic at 97 percent.59 Statistics are no way to gauge the horror

55 Powell, Far Country, 110.
56 Many Aborigines refer to the period of frontier violence in their region as the ‘wild times.’ See Peter ‘wild times.’ See Peter Read and Jay Read, Long Time Olden Time: Aboriginal Accounts of Northern Territory History (Alice Springs: Institute of Aboriginal Development, 1991), 74.
57 Colin Tatz, Reflections on the Politics of Remembering and Forgetting (Sydney: Centre for Comparative Genocide Studies, Macquarie University, 1995), 14.
but as their terrible meaning is understood, there is an uneasy shift in the mind as the recognition grows of the true meaning of the ‘killing times’.

Such was the depth and breadth of frontier violence that Deborah Bird Rose draws on David Denholm’s concept of the ‘drear dread deathscape in the Australian heart,’ and Michael Taussig’s even darker concept of ‘death space.’ Taussig examined the brutal regime of the Spanish and British rubber industry in the Putomayo jungles of the upper Amazon basin in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century.

A society shrouded in an order so orderly that its chaos was far more intense than anything that had preceded it — a death-space in the land of the living where torture’s certain uncertainty fed the great machinery of the arbitrariness of power, power on the rampage — that great screaming morass of chaos that lies on the underside of order and without which order could not exist.  

This is a powerful image but one carefully chosen to ensure that the Aboriginal frontier experiences were not buried by the silence or mythmaking that surrounds so much of Northern Territory’s and Australia’s frontier history. The ‘silence’ perpetuated a deep-seated and pervasive Australian myth that underlies our perception of ourselves as democrats to the core who cannot and do not abuse human rights, let alone commit genocide.  

Violence on the Northern Territory pastoral frontier was unrelenting until well into the twentieth century.

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Violence was one of the most intentional, direct and effective means of achieving colonisation … Its presence needs to be emphasised, but we must also look beyond its effects, to the dynamics of subsequent power relationships. … In a variety of ways, whites instilled a sense of fear and subordination. 'Colonialism' meant 'power' and dominance, though in the Northern Territory the colonials did not establish complete rule. Violence was a key method of conquest, though by the 1930s wholesale massacres were less frequent.63

Colonisation of the Northern Territory was not a ‘new’ development but the inexorable progression of a process begun in Sydney in 1788. Black–White contact was not neatly confined to a clearly defined frontier. The ‘contact zone’ was a fluid and evolving struggle for land and resources that often resulted in conflict or war. The opposing sides in the conflict were ‘not on the other side of neutral ground; the disputed area was ‘the very land each settler lived upon’.64

Andrew Markus provided a useful summary of the dynamics of this frontier contact by identifying six main features in the process of Black dispossession and White occupation. Black and White economies and culture were incompatible. Blacks lacked the military strength to impose their will on the Whites. Most Blacks had no place, and a few a lowly place, in White society. The pastoral industry was one of the few that offered any attraction to Blacks. Blacks would not accept White claims to ownership and dominion over land without the use of force. State-sanctioned use of armed force was necessary to overcome Black resistance. These factors were exacerbated during the period of dispossession because Blacks were placed outside the protection of the legal system. Violence against them was acceptable and indeed mandated by a value system that denied their humanity.65 Although the dynamics of

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63 McGrath, Born in the Cattle, 7.
64 Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors, 109.
65 Andrew Markus, Australian Race Relations (Sydney: Allen & Unwin Australia, 1994), 30–34.
contact varied from place to place, as did the groups and individuals involved, Markus concluded, ‘the dominant value system sanctioned rule by violence, and rule by violence was a feature of frontier life.’

White racial contempt towards Aborigines on the frontier reached vicious extremes. Some considered Aborigines ‘as wild beasts, to be hunted down wherever found — as vermin to be exterminated without mercy whenever caught.’ It was not uncommon to ‘hunt’ Aboriginals with dogs, and treat killing as sport.

Frontier violence was often seen as inevitable but it should not be mistaken as a one-way process. Blacks were not only victims of violence and retaliated to it; they also instigated it. They defended their land and resisted occupation with all the means available to them. While violence may have been inevitable, it was neither predictable nor constant. The ‘great fear’ was a constant companion on the frontier where,

the normal condition of inland life was an armed, watchful, wary, nervous calm. White and blacks spent months, even years simply watching one another, waiting … The victim had to deliver himself up. That is the whole point of the horror.

The cycle of violence and brutality only ended when one side of the conflict could bear it no more. ‘Across the years the Great Fear inspired and then fed on these brutalities, so that there was a certain gruesome progression in the quality of the murdering’. Visiting English novelist Anthony Trollope observed in 1873 that:

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66 Ibid., 36.
68 Ibid., 203.
69 Hoberman, Darwin’s Athletes, 113.
70 Denholm, The Colonial Australians, 41.
71 Ibid.
We have taken away their land, have destroyed their food, made them subject to our laws, which are antagonistic to their habits and traditions, have endeavoured to make them subject to our tastes, which they hate, have massacred them when they defend themselves and their possessions after their own fashion, and have taught them by hard warfare to acknowledge us to be their masters.\(^7^2\)

The ‘gruesome progression’ in frontier conflict reached its zenith in the Northern Territory at a time when modern technology, in the form of the introduction of the breech-loading repeating rifles in the 1870s, coincided with commencement of the expansion of White settlement from Palmerston.

Increasingly mounted where they had once walked … the worst of the lower orders spent the next forty years of Colonial Australia tasting the joys of being free of fear to better relish despising the Aborigine. Trained by three and even four generations of forebears, they had absorbed all of the code of conduct built on the Great Fear, and they took the brutality with them through north Queensland and the Northern Territory.\(^7^3\)

The frontier was effectively lawless, beyond the reach and control of the South Australian authorities.\(^7^4\) Although the administration included Aboriginal Protectors, the position lacked any real power or authority. On the ever-expanding frontier, the Protector’s position was usually invested in the police who saw their role as providing security for White settlers and ensuring ‘progress’ and ‘civilisation’ were not hindered. As McKenna has observed, ‘there is no evidence of a frontier culture even minutely concerned with its obligations to Aboriginal rights, only one

\(^7^2\) Colin Tatz, With Intent to Destroy (London: Verso, 2003), 75–76.
\(^7^3\) Denholm, The Colonial Australians, 44.
convinced of its rights to dispossess Aboriginal people. Throughout the South Australian administration, the absence of legislation in regard to Aborigines resulted in de facto ‘control’ passing to interdependent complicit police and settlers. Race relations became a local matter with little direction or interference from the government.

The Legislative Response

At the time of Palmerston’s settlement, South Australian policy towards Aborigines was guided by the findings of the 1860 Select Committee that concluded, ‘it was a melancholy fact that “the race is doomed to extinction.”’ The Northern Territory administrative response to continuous frontier violence and the perpetual Aboriginal ‘problem’ between 1869 and 1910 was legislative ambivalence and inaction, combined with tacit support of White development on a distant, lawless frontier. In the best traditions of British Imperialism, the ‘good’ official ‘was the man who knew when to ignore the law and when to allow or assist the whites to take it into their own hands’.

Throughout this period, the advance of settlement was marked by Aboriginal ‘outrages’ like the Barrow Creek killings of 1874 and the Daly River Mine killings of 1884. Deaths of Whites by Blacks resulted in official and unofficial punitive parties undertaken to ensure that the Aborigines were taught a ‘lesson’. It was a pattern that continued well into the twentieth century.

Although legislative action was minimal, the government developed an approach to Aborigines in the settled areas based on ‘protection’ and control. In a tragic irony, ‘protection’ was offered to Aborigines who had been ‘pacified’ and willing to subject themselves to White ‘control’. In effect, this meant that Aborigines who had ‘come

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75 Mark McKenna, Looking For Blackfellas’ Point: An Australian History of Place (Sydney: University of New South Wales Press Ltd, 2002), 51.
78 Rowley, The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, 216.
in’ to the margins of White settlement would receive some welfare from the government. Tim Rowse has explored the importance of rations in the control of Aborigines. The White settlers required Black labour but only on their terms. Settlements served as an ‘island of civility’ where Blacks were tolerated on the fringe until considered ‘civilised’ enough to be useful to the town and its White masters.\(^7^9\)

An essential tool in the ‘civilising’ process was the distribution of rations by the police from 1879 onwards. The complex motivations behind Black–White interactions may not have been fully understood by either party but rations became an essential means of institutionalising colonial control throughout the Northern Territory.\(^8^0\) Once forced to the fringes of White settlement, Blacks were drawn inextricably into a process described by Colin Tatz as ‘pauperisation’. The incentive, responsibility and obligation to undertake traditional activities was removed and replaced on by an increasing dependence on rations and White welfare.\(^8^1\) Blacks who remained on their own country were subject to continued ‘pacification’ waged by White settlers with the active support of the Police.\(^8^2\) In some areas, such as Central Australia, ‘pacification’ was supported by deliberate government inaction. A Sub-Protector of Aborigines was not appointed until 1891 when the worst of the frontier violence had subsided.\(^8^3\)

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\(^8^0\) Ibid., 207.


\(^8^3\) Ibid., 403.
Legislative reform of Aboriginal welfare was not seriously considered until 1899. The Select Committee enquiry into The Aborigines Bill 1899\(^{84}\) provided evidence of common frontier practices where ‘outside the boundaries of the more settled districts, that is, pastoral settlements, a different state of relations exists between Europeans employed on stations and aborigines.’\(^{85}\) The evidence of Government officials and police was damning. Inspector Foelsche noted in his submission the practice of ‘running down’ boys [Aborigines] and forcibly taking them to stations to work. He also indicated that young girls were obtained in this fashion — a practice introduced from western Queensland — and concluded that ‘more than half the offences of violence committed by natives are attributable to obtaining gins forcibly or otherwise.’\(^{86}\) Government Resident Dashwood, who drafted the Bill, likened the

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\(^{84}\) Select Committee of the Legislative Council on the Aborigines Bill, 1899, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices, SAPP, 77/1899, Adelaide, 1899.

\(^{85}\) Ibid., 26.

\(^{86}\) Ibid., 112.
practice to slavery.\(^7\) He firmly believed ‘that the advent of the white race in the Territory will, in the course of time, result in the total extinction of the black race, as has been the case in the southern colonies.’\(^8\) The issue of the ‘evil’ of ‘half-castes’ was raised repeatedly throughout the hearings.\(^9\) It was noted that due to the rise of prostitution the number of half-caste children was growing and any attempts to ‘civilise’ them would be enhanced by their removal from their family.\(^{10}\) Dashwood’s proposed Bill, based on the Queensland Aboriginals Protection and Restriction of the Sale of Opium Act of 1897, was passed by the South Australian House of Assembly in July 1899, but when sent to the Legislative Council committee it lapsed due to a change of government.\(^{11}\)

**Federation**

The initial impact of Australian federation went largely unnoticed in the Northern Territory, where the first decade of the twentieth century was one of continuing economic stagnation and population decline that had begun during the 1890s. The South Australian Government conceded that it could no longer afford its Northern Territory and devoted the decade to negotiating its transfer to the newly-formed Commonwealth while maintaining its economic hegemony.\(^{12}\) In December 1901, the newly federated Commonwealth of Australia imposed the Immigration Restriction Act 1901. Although the Chinese population of the Northern Territory had been diminishing since the South Australian Immigration Restriction Act 1888, the

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\(^7\) Ibid., 110.  
\(^8\) Ibid.  
\(^9\) Ibid., 2.  
\(^{10}\) Ibid., 110.  
Commonwealth’s ‘White Australia’ policy would further tighten immigration to the Northern Territory.93

In 1907, C E Herbert, Government Resident from 1905 to 1910, recognised the urgent need for the ‘protection’ of Aborigines and that ‘the Northern Territory is now the only portion of Australia having a considerable native population which possesses no legislation worthy of a moment’s consideration.’94 The Northern Territory Aborigines Act 1910 was introduced to Parliament in 1908, but was not enacted until 7 December 1910, just three weeks prior to the Commonwealth assuming control of the Northern Territory. The Commonwealth’s Aboriginals Ordinance 1911 was based on the South Australian legislation until it was replaced by the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918.95 The 1910 legislation, very similar to that proposed in 1899, provided the legal and administrative framework to control Aboriginal lives in a regime of ‘protection’ and segregation. For the first time in the Northern Territory, legislation was instituted that formally created a racially based hierarchy based on ‘an oppressive paternalism that severely restricted the civil liberties of Aborigines in a way that would last for decades to come.’96

The Commonwealth Administration in Darwin, 1911-1953

Many viewed the transition to a Commonwealth administration as a new beginning after the ‘bitter failure and abject resignation’ that had characterised the last decades of the South Australian regime.97 These hopes proved to be misplaced because, despite the lessons learnt from the South Australian experience, the Commonwealth repeated the same mistakes: a distant government, out of touch with the people and

93 Resident Chinese were granted Certificates of Exemption, allowing the holder to leave and return to Australia without impediment. The pearling industry also received an exemption to allow the continued use of skilled divers and crews from Japan, and other Asian countries. See Julia Martinez, ‘Ethnic Policy and Practice in Darwin,’ in, Ganter, ed., Mixed Relations, 125.
95 Tony Austin, Simply the Survival of the Fittest: Aboriginal Administration in South Australia’s Northern Territory 1863-1910 (Darwin: Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 1992), 93.
96 Ibid., 94.
97 Bauer, Historical Geography, 194.
the environment. Some change was immediate. Palmerston was officially renamed Darwin in 1911. Census figures indicate that the town was Australia’s most cosmopolitan. The total population of 1380 included: ‘Chinese 442, 374 Europeans, 305 Aborigines, 77 Japanese, 52 Filipinos, 49 Timorese, 21 Malays, 7 Javanese, 4 Siamese, 5 Singhalese, 5 South sea Islanders’. The incongruity of Australia’s most multi-racial community being governed by an administration committed to the White Australia Policy would result in a volatile mix that forged the character of Darwin between the World Wars.

World War I precipitated great social change in Darwin. The Northern Territory sent 250 men to war, proportionally more than any other Australian state. The local union movement, established in 1911, became a formidable force fuelled by a growing working class. In 1914, Vestey Brothers, a British multinational meat conglomerate, agreed to establish a meat-processing and freezing works in Darwin. The industrialisation of the Darwin workforce resulted in a trebling of the European population (concentrated in Darwin) from 1,173 in 1911 to 3,767 in 1918. Unions and union membership grew continuously until 1918. In 1914, there were three registered unions with a membership 647; by 1918, there were four with a membership of 1,559. Throughout this period, the Australian Workers Union, as the organiser of unskilled labour, remained the most powerful. The unions radically altered the social dynamics of Darwin by fostering a new militant working class that opposed the Commonwealth administration while also reinforcing prevailing racism by excluding Black membership until after World War II. This was the catalyst for the ‘Darwin Rebellion’ in December 1918, which resulted in the ousting of the

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98 Named changed from Palmerston to Darwin, 3 March 1911. See Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 8.
99 Ibid., 4.
100 James, No Man's Land, 89.
101 Vestey Brothers was commonly referred to as Vestyes.
Commonwealth Administrator, J A Gilruth, and establishing Darwin’s reputation as a union-dominated Bolshevist outpost.\(^{104}\)

The Depression came early to Darwin after the withdrawal of Vesteys at the end of the war and the complete closure of its meatworks in 1925. By the mid 1920s, Darwin’s economy languished, resulting in considerable unemployment and unrest. The unrest only subsided in 1933 when the town’s White population trebled, from 884 in 1933 to 2687 in 1939 as the town developed as Australia’s northern defence hub.

The last overt signs of Black–White frontier conflict were the Coniston killings of 1928 and the Caledon Bay killings of 1932. Southern horror at the Coniston killings resulted in a public commission to examine the incident. Although the commission found that police action resulting in fourteen Black deaths was justified, it was the last sanctioned police reprisal. Old habits died hard. Following the news of the Caledon Bay killings of five Japanese trepangers on the Arnhem Land coast by Balumumu Aborigines, and the subsequent death of Constable McColl, who was sent out to investigate, Administrator Weddell recommended the dispatch of a police party. Prime Minister Lyons intervened and vetoed the decision.\(^{105}\)

The outbreak of World War II in September 1939 initially made little impact on daily life in Darwin where people read weekly reports of ‘The European War’ in the Northern Standard. By December 1941, however, the Japanese and the war were quickly approaching. Darwin’s civilian population of women and children, approximately 2,200 people, were evacuated by sea and air. The last aircraft left on 18 January. The Japanese bombed Darwin on 19 February 1942. It was the most devastating of the 64 bombing raids, which continued until November 1943. The evacuation marked the end of civilian sporting activity until 1945 when key Darwin

\(^{104}\) Report on Northern Territory Administration, CPP 28/1920, Melbourne, 1920, 3.

\(^{105}\) Powell, Far Country, 180. Unofficial estimates indicate as many as 70 Aboriginal deaths at Coniston.
sporting families such as, the Bonsons, Ah Mats, McGinnesses, Hazelbanes, Lew Fatts and Chins were able to return.¹⁰⁶

World War II and the post war reconstruction of the 1950s resulted in profound change that transformed Darwin from ‘the wild and eccentric colonial outpost into a thriving capital city.’¹⁰⁷ A rapid rise in the Northern Territory population saw Aborigines become a minority in their own land for the first time. The non-indigenous population, including people classified as ‘half-caste’, increased from 10,898 in 1947 to 16,469 in 1954, while in the same period the Black population increased from 13,900 to 15,500.¹⁰⁸ Darwin’s isolation, which had always magnified its frontier image and protected it from southern scrutiny, was greatly reduced as transport routes developed both within Australia and internationally. The Northern Territory also began its long road to self-government with the establishment of an appointed Legislative Council in 1947.¹⁰⁹

Commonwealth Aboriginal Legislation and Affairs

Upon assuming government, the Commonwealth immediately enacted legislation drafted by the South Australian Government as the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911. The Ordinance was based on the assumption that Aborigines were a dying race, and in the meantime they should be maintained as an economic underclass. It resulted in a

¹⁰⁶ Vos, The Role Models. These families included many Darwin sports champions. The family names appear often in Part III of this thesis. Note the spelling of McGinness. Stephen Barnard McGinness, an Irish immigrant to Australia in the late 1890s changed the spelling from McGuinness soon after his arrival. Stephen McGinness, married Ulungundubu (Lucy), a Kungarakan woman, in the early 1900s. They had four sons, Barney, Jack, Joe and Val, and one daughter, Margaret. Barney, Jack, Joe and Val were all prominent sportsmen and footballers between 1920 and World War II. Jack and Joe were also prominent unionists and rights campaigners. Kathy Mills, daughter of Jack McGinness, personal communication with the author, 23 January 2009. Ah Mat is of Malay origin. Spelling has changed over time. Ah Mat is the most common, although Ah Matt was also used. For consistency I use Ah Mat unless in quotations.


¹⁰⁸ Margaret Landrigan and Julie Wells, ‘Populating the Northern Territory,’ in Modern Frontier, eds. Wells, et. al., 103.

¹⁰⁹ The Legislative Council consisted of the Administrator, seven nominated representatives and six members elected by the Northern Territory. See Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 165.
regime based on increasing segregation, oppression, regulation and control, which would become the template for Aboriginal legislation until the adoption of the so-called assimilation policy of the 1950s. A Chief Protector and Sub-Protecors administered the Ordinance. The Chief Protector became the legal guardian of every Aborigine and part-Aborigine under eighteen. He could take ‘Aborigines and Half-castes’ into custody. His powers enabled him to control Aboriginal employment and prohibit Asians from employing them at all. The Ordinance gave the Chief Protector power to exclude Aborigines from any area. Many common practices from the first days of White settlement were enshrined in regulation.\textsuperscript{110} Darwin was declared a ‘prohibited’ area forcing Aborigines to acquire a special permit to work there. Whites and Asians were excluded from Aboriginal camps.\textsuperscript{111} The Ordinance included provisions to establish reserves that would make segregation possible. Tatz argues that this ‘protection’ legislation acted as one of two protective fences to shelter a doomed people. The second was locating Aboriginal missions and reserves in geographically isolated locations to ‘keep whites out and Aborigines in protective custody.’\textsuperscript{112} In implementing this policy in the Northern Territory, Commonwealth Aboriginal reserves and missions were established in some of the most isolated locations in Australia.

Darwin’s Kahlin Compound was established in 1912 and Aborigines in the town were forced to relocate there. Professor Baldwin Spencer, Special Commissioner and Chief Protector responsible for implementing the Ordinance 1912–13, also paid special attention to the ‘half-caste question’.\textsuperscript{113} The ‘half-castes’ in the Territory numbered approximately 300 and Spencer concluded that ‘one thing is certain and

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{110} Phillip Jones, \textit{Ochre and Rust: Artefacts and Encounters on Australian Frontiers} (Adelaide: Wakefield Press, 2007), 160. On 6 March Goyder constructed a stockade around the surveyors camp to stop fraternisation between the camp and the Larrakia. The practice of keeping Aborigines on the fringe of settlements was maintained throughout the Northern Territory.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Powell, \textit{Far Country}, 161.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Tatz, \textit{With Intent to Destroy}, 81–82.
\end{itemize}
that is the white population as a whole will never mix with half-castes.\footnote{114} Spencer concluded that the ‘best and kindest’ thing to do was to separate ‘half-caste’ children from their parents and to place them on reserves with people of full Aboriginal descent.\footnote{115} By 1913, Spencer’s plans had altered and Aboriginal and Coloured children were housed together in gender–segregated dormitories at Kahlin compound and attended the new school there. The system initiated by Spencer to separate children of mixed decent from their parents would have dire consequences to this day; the control hardened and became increasingly regulated under following regimes. Government regulation and control intensified in all areas of Aboriginal lives. In 1913, Administrator Gilruth introduced a regime whereby Blacks in government employment were paid 25 shillings per week. Two shillings and sixpence was paid into a trust fund and the remainder paid in kind. To access the trust funds, recipients had to seek permission each time they wished to draw on the funds and had to purchase items in the presence of a Protector or by presenting a written order to the store.\footnote{116}

In 1918, the Commonwealth revised the legislation and introduced the Aboriginals Ordinance 1918 that further tightened regulations and controls, especially for people of mixed descent. The new legislation further defined the latter, adding ‘quadroon’ to the definition of ‘half-caste’. For the first time a distinction was made between the treatment of male and female Aborigines. The Chief Protector retained guardianship over Aboriginal women and ‘half-castes’ indefinitely but ‘half-caste’ men were released from control at eighteen unless ‘in his opinion, it is necessary or desirable in the interests of the Aboriginal or half-caste for him to do so’.\footnote{117} The Ordinance strengthened the Government’s ability to compel Aborigines to live on reserves or institutions giving it a greater reformatory purpose. The Protector received new powers over employers with a distinction made between employment in town and

\footnote{114} Ibid.
\footnote{115} Ibid., 47.
\footnote{116} Austin, I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly, 67–68. A White railway worker during this period received two shillings an hour.
\footnote{117} Ibid., 67.
Those employed in town would receive wages while those on stations and in rural areas received payment in only food and clothing.\textsuperscript{118}

During the 1920s, many feared that the North would be overrun by a hybrid ‘coloured’ race.\textsuperscript{119} J W Bleakley reviewed Northern Territory Aboriginal affairs in 1928 and produced his report, The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia. The ‘half-caste’ question attracted considerable attention. The report identified miscegenation as an ‘evil’ and ‘perhaps the most difficult problem of all to deal with is that of the half-castes — how to check the breeding of them and how best to deal with those now with us.’\textsuperscript{120} Bleakley made it clear that Blacks and ‘half-castes’ were essential as a source of cheap labour and Kahlin Compound played an important role in providing a reliable supply.\textsuperscript{121} Dr Cecil Cook, Northern Territory Chief Protector and Chief Medical Officer between 1927 and 1939, disagreed with Bleakley on the practicality of ‘checking’ the ‘half-caste’ population and was given an almost free hand by the Commonwealth to implement an experiment in social engineering to ‘breed out the black blood’ by encouraging Whites to marry Aborigines of mixed descent.\textsuperscript{122} Cook’s intention to reduce the Coloured population through a program of controlled ‘mating’ was based on the ‘science’ of eugenics. Tatz argues that it was ‘a clearly articulated intent to commit what would be come to be called ‘genocide’ in that the ultimate aim was the disappearance of Aborigines.\textsuperscript{123}

In the early 1930s some Coloured men could gain full citizenship rights at the age of twenty-one with the exception of the right to consume alcohol. The North Australian Workers Union (NAWU), which had an increasing Coloured union membership,
campaigned against this restriction from 1929. The campaign continued throughout the 1930s. William ‘Put’ Ah Mat successfully led a delegation in 1933 to the relevant Commonwealth Minister to change the Aboriginals Ordinance to allow ‘half-castes’ to drink in Darwin’s pubs although the exemptions from the Ordinance that allowed Ah Mat and others to re-enter the hotels to drink were not enacted until 1936.124 Although union restrictions on Coloured membership were loosened during this period, Blacks remained excluded.125 The Coloured community became increasingly assertive and with the assistance of Xavier Herbert, acting superintendent at the Kahlín compound from January to June 1936, called a meeting that resulted in the formation of the Euraustralian League, later known as the Northern Territory Half-caste Association.126 This was the first Coloured political group to challenge the government’s Aboriginal policy and the Ordinances.

In February 1939, John McEwen, the federal Minister for the Interior, released a White paper proposing a ‘New Deal’ in federal Aboriginal policy, whichpromoted what later became the assimilation policies of the 1950s.127 It advocated an egalitarian policy based on the principle that ‘native Australian people should be raising their status so as to entitle them by right, and by qualification to the ordinary rights of citizenship’.128 The policy rejected the categorisation of Aborigines according to degrees of Aboriginal blood, replacing them with terms locating them on an imagined linear progression toward White civilisation; Myalls or Aboriginals in their native state, semi-detribalized, the fully detribalized, and half-castes.129 The policy did not envisage equality for all Aborigines but rather that some individual

126 Austin, Never Trust a Government Man, 209.
Aborigines could be encouraged and trained to become like White Australians.\textsuperscript{130} The intent was clear. ‘Myalls or Aboriginals in their native state, semi-detribalized, the fully detribalized’ were to be left alone or ‘protected by law from white intrusion’ in the desert while for half-castes there was some prospect of ‘raising their status’.\textsuperscript{131} A new Department of Native Affairs separating Aboriginal affairs from the administration of health was intended but wartime events prevented the policy’s implementation.

One of the many profound social changes brought about by World War II was the use of Black labour by the defence forces and the affect that this had on post-war race relations. The crisis bought about by the war, combined with the dire need for labour, resulted in a completely fresh approach to Aborigines in contact with the war effort. ‘Territory Aborigines found themselves, for the first time in their lives, on terms of equality with whites, subject to the same pay, conditions and discipline.’\textsuperscript{132} Black labour was recognised as invaluable and reliable. The army labour camps were a complete contrast to their experiences under the Aboriginals Ordinance and demonstrated for the first time that there was an alternative. The food, living and working conditions were better than anything they had ever experienced. The wages, although less than those paid to White soldiers, were more than they had ever received before and were paid regularly and directly.\textsuperscript{133}

World War II was the catalyst for profound changes in perceived notions of race. The horrors of the Nazi death camps were revealed and policies of open racial discrimination were not longer acceptable.\textsuperscript{134} Biologists and social scientists began to abandon theories of racial superiority and the United Nations played a significant role.

\textsuperscript{130} Rowley, The Destruction of Aboriginal Society, 330.
\textsuperscript{131} Tatz, ‘Aboriginal Administration’, 12.
\textsuperscript{132} Powell, The Shadow’s Edge: Australia’s Northern War (Darwin: Charles Darwin University Press, 2007), 246. It should be noted that Aborigines rarely received the same pay as Whites.
\textsuperscript{133} Read, Long Time Olden Time, 122.
\textsuperscript{134} Markus, Australian Race Relations, 155.
role in developing the Declaration of Human Rights from 1949 to 1951. In Australia, this resulted in a shift from policies of ‘protection’ to assimilation. The policy took administrative effect when Paul Hasluck was appointed Minister for Territories (1951–63) and instituted a ‘virtual revolution’ in Aboriginal affairs. At the time Hasluck was considering reforms, Black workers in Darwin began to assert their industrial rights through strike action, and the NAWU and the Australian Half-caste Progressive Association mounted a concerted campaign under the leadership of Jack McGinness to continually attack and challenge the injustices of the Ordinance and advocate the granting of full citizenship rights.

The passage of the Welfare Bill, designed to replace the Aboriginals Ordinance, through the Legislative Council from late 1952 to June 1953, was stormy and controversial. As the Bill passed through the Council, it was both celebrated as providing ‘freedom’ for ‘half-castes’, and criticized for providing the ‘kind of power Hitler dreamt about.’ A point of contention was that as an instrument designed to administer the lives of Aboriginal people it nowhere referred to ‘Aborigines’, but only to ‘wards’. Members of the Northern Territory Legislative Council and the Australian Labor Party objected in the belief that it was possible under the draft bill for ‘anyone’ to be declared a ward of the state. It also raised concerns in the Coloured community, which sent a delegation to Hasluck to demand

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135 Ibid., 156.
136 Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 184.
138 Jack McGinness was president of the Australian Half-caste Progressive Association and NAWU representative, as well as being involved in community sports, which ensured that the campaign for citizenship was well informed and co-ordinated.
139 The Northern Standard, 22 January 1953.
140 Ibid., 29 January 1953.
142 The Northern Standard, 16 April 1953.
that the Bill distance them from Aborigines and any legislative restrictions.  
‘Considerable semantic ingenuity’ ensured that under the legislation only ‘full
blood’ Aborigines could be declared ‘wards’ by linking wardship declarations to
voting rights, which effectively excluded Aborigines. The ‘device’ was simple: the
Ordinance defined those who could not be declared wards: those who could vote,
would-be voters and ‘migrants’ who in time could qualify to vote.

In June 1953 the Welfare Ordinance was finally passed and declared ‘the single most
important step yet taken in the approach to the aboriginal problem.’ It liberated the
Coloured community from the yoke of the Aboriginals Ordinance by granting them
citizenship while maintaining other Aborigines as wards of the state. As Tatz pointed
out, ‘the hypocrisy of the ‘new deal’ lay in the administrative declaration of all but
nine Aborigines as wards.’ For wards, nothing had changed. To all intents and
purposes they remained under the same restrictions imposed by the Aboriginals
Ordinance 1911 and would remain so until the Social Welfare Ordinance abolished
the concept of wardship in 1964.

Northern Territory history is forged by its distinctive social and physical
environment. The often violent and always complex relationships between White
settler society, the Black owners of the land and the development of a local Coloured
community gave it an exotic ‘otherness’ isolated from ‘mainstream’ Australia, a
place ‘apart’. The South Australian government ignored Aboriginal rights, turned a
blind eye to the worst excesses of the frontier and denied the necessity to develop a
legislative response until 1910. On the verge of handing over to the Commonwealth,
it passed legislation that positioned the Government as ‘protector’ of a dying race in

143 Sue Stanton, ‘The Australian Half-Caste Progressive Association: The Fight for Freedom and
144 C D Rowley, Outcasts in White Australia (Canberra: Australian National University Press, 1971),
193.
145 Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 201.
146 The Northern Territory. Report for the Period 1st July, 1949 to 30th June, 1953, CPP 2268/55,
the face of the inevitable march of White civilisation. The Commonwealth instituted the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911 that saw ‘protection’ evolve into a regime based on increasing surveillance, control, regulation and segregation. During the inter-war years, Darwin’s growing Coloured community refused to conform and fought for recognition and rights in the face of pervasive and entrenched institutional racism. World War II was the catalyst for change for Black Territorians who for the first time saw that there was an alternative. The Northern Territory’s physical isolation also ended and global forces made it impossible to return to pre-war policy and practice. The assimilation policy and leadership of Paul Hasluck looked as though it might transform Aboriginal Affairs. The Welfare Ordinance 1953 finally ‘liberated’ the Coloured community from the grip of the Aboriginals Ordinance but the Black community was suspended in time as ‘wards’ subject to the same controls as in 1911.

Parts II and III show that sport played a paradoxical role in Northern Territory society from 1869 to 1953. Firstly, it was a conservative force in the construction and maintenance of Northern Territory White society during the South Australian administration by excluding or controlling non-White participation. Then, during the Commonwealth administration until 1953, it became a transformative force when it was embraced by the non-White community who used it to create a more multicultural, inclusive and representative society.
Part II: The Untold Story: Sport during the South Australian Government Administration, 1869 to 1911
Chapter 2: The Establishment of Sport in the Northern Territory, 1869-1873

Christmas Day 1870 came to us at a small watercourse a few miles south of Pine Creek, which was celebrated with customary rejoicing, and that rare faculty that Englishmen have of observing old traditions under entirely new conditions ... On Christmas morning a race track was prepared and sports were indulged in.¹

At the time when Goyder’s survey party aboard the Moonta anchored at Fort Point in Darwin harbour in February 1869, the colonies of south-eastern Australia were well established as British territory. Northern Australia, by contrast, was still considered a distant, ‘alien’ land to be conquered and tamed.² The surveyors were pathfinders entrusted with the task of claiming, naming and transforming the new territory.³ While the appropriation of land was foremost in the minds of the South Australian White settlers, the surveyors also carried with them an imagined British community, a social blueprint of an archetypal British society. Sport was an essential component and central in claiming and transforming the social landscape.

The construction of an imagined community began even before the settlers arrived. The Moonta Herald and Northern Territory Gazette was printed on board the ship immediately after it left Adelaide. The first edition included the article ‘New Years Day On Board The Moonta’ and provides the template for a typical ‘British’ New Year in Palmerston.

¹ Sidney Wellington Herbert, ‘Reminiscences of Life in the Northern Territory During the Construction of the Overland Telegraph, August 1870 to November 1872, And His Experiences in the Territory in 1873 as a Member of a Party Prospecting for Gold,’ Northern Territory Collection, NTL, Darwin, 80.
² Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 70.
On this day, so celebrated during the long ages for its sports and pastimes, fitting commencement of a New Year, our fancy carries us back to those we have left.

We [illegible] a picture them to ourselves enjoying the [illegible] to their hearts’ content, at Races, Picnics, and Regattas; ever and anon perhaps, casting a thought on those five hundred miles away, and probably wondering what our occupations are on this festive day.4

The establishment and diffusion of sport from Palmerston, the ‘capital’, throughout the Territory provides a remarkable case study of the role and extent that sports played in recreating and sustaining Britishness at the height of the ‘Age of Empire’. The success of the venture was not assured; four previous attempts at British colonisation of North Australia had failed.5 Palmerston was a ‘fragile outpost’ during the first years of White settlement, little more than an isolated surveyors’ camp.6 It was not until the construction of the Overland Telegraph line and the discovery of gold that Palmerston’s future was secure.

Sport acted as a social bridgehead by creating a familiar space enabling British colonists to enter strange ‘uncivilised’ lands peopled by ‘savages’ in the name of ‘progress’. Although only one of many colonial social agents, the very public nature of sport made it a constant means of conveying and displaying British values, attitudes, behaviour and character both within the community and to others. Sport’s portability and versatility allowed it to play a significant role in quickly and effectively re-establishing and sustaining a British socio-cultural framework in new

4 The Moonta Herald and Northern Territory Gazette, 2 January 1869.
5 The first attempts at British colonisation in North Australia were the colonial outposts of Fort Dundas (1824–1827), Raffles Bay (1827–1829) and Port Essington (1838–1849) and South Australia’s first attempt at settlement at Escape Cliffs (1864–1866).
6 Jones, Ochre and Rust, 1.
environments where it had a key role in defining and controlling society generally. It provided a social anchor and a reassuring sense of place where other social and cultural institutions were not so easily transplanted. Central to the British imperial cultural framework and ethic of conquest was the unshakeable belief in their own racial superiority and that they were ‘natural and undisputed masters’ of ‘lesser’ races and had the inalienable right to impose themselves on them and their lands.

The initial years of White occupation and settlement of Palmerston and the Northern Territory were an aberration in the history of sport. From 1869 to 1873, the White population remained small and, although race relations between the Larrakia and Whites were imperfect, they were rarely characterised by overt violence. This resulted in a period of relative ‘freedom’ for Aborigines who were able to participate in sports and other leisure activities in a manner that would be impossible in later years.

Many authors have identified the 1850s to the 1870s in colonial Australia as a period of relative ‘freedom’ for the participation of Aborigines in sports due to the lack of legislation and control over Aboriginal lives; the prevailing belief was that they were no longer a threat to Europeans and/or were a ‘doomed race’. Tatz argues that this relative freedom to participate in sports was due to a lack of legislative controls on Aborigines but this ‘absence’ also tacitly sanctioned genocide. That was certainly the case on the Northern Territory frontier (discussed in Chapter 4). If there was a brief window of ‘freedom’ for Black participation in White sports, it was in the first few years of White settlement in Palmerston during the transition period from surveyor’s camp to colonial settlement from 1869 to 1873. Although Blacks were forced to live in camps on the fringe of Palmerston, this was by way of social custom.

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9 Vamplew and Stoddart, Sport in Australia, 68. See also Cashman, Paradise of Sport, 132.
rather than enforcement by the Aboriginal Protector or police, which was the case in later periods. They enjoyed relatively free movement in and around the town and their participation in public social events as spectators, if not actual participants, was commonplace. During this time, sports were organised on an ad hoc basis but they did give a sense of normality. Demographics demanded that initial interactions between Blacks and Whites were more cautious and restrained. This was because White survival and security depended on it: but once their dominance was assured, race relations took on a similar aspect to other Australian colonies.

The first sports practiced in Palmerston required little equipment or special facilities. Early sporting activities such as horseracing, athletics and sailing regattas were organised around annual and/or holiday events. Public holidays are important elements in the construction of an imagined community because they reinforced the social order by celebrating a shared past and present.11 Sports committees sprang to life and gave Palmerston’s ‘leading citizens’ an opportunity to establish their credentials and status as ‘sportsmen’ and ‘gentlemen’. Aborigines were often included in these activities not so much as part of the community but as a means of acknowledging their undeniable presence while at the same ensuring they were kept in their ‘place’ and at a safe social distance. As conditional as this acknowledgement and accommodation of a Black presence in Palmerston was, it was short-lived.

The Surveyors’ Camp and The Overland Telegraph Line

Goyder directed the survey party that there would be ‘no free-and-easy relationships with them [Aborigines].’12 He was concerned that the Whites and the Larrakia might have become too familiar with each other due to recent experiences at the ill-fated

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South Australian settlement of Escape Cliffs.\textsuperscript{13} Often the encounters were marked by curiosity and bartering in what Jones described as ‘the dance of objects proffered and accepted, discarded and pilfered’.\textsuperscript{14} Some surveyors were more guarded, if not contemptuous. ‘There is a tribe of very miserable half starved blacks here. They have camped a few yards from us and are quite peaceable as yet.’\textsuperscript{15} Aboriginal youths, women and later men were observed in and around the surveyors’ camps in the first weeks of settlement and were familiar with the settlers and considered ‘rather cheeky.’\textsuperscript{16} The Larrakia response to White occupation is well documented in Samantha Wells’s ‘Negotiating Place in Colonial Darwin: Interactions between Aborigines and whites, 1869–1911’.\textsuperscript{17} She has provided an excellent analysis of the complex social dynamic, recognising that neither side fully understood the motivations or actions of the other and that ‘there were myriad responses to colonisation by both colonists and Aboriginal people which were influenced by the nature, time, and place of the individual encounters.’\textsuperscript{18} Interactions between Black and White, including sport, represented part of a complex web of accommodation and resistance to the invaders.

Early weeks of the settlement were dominated by the work of establishing the surveyors’ camp and surveying the township of Palmerston.\textsuperscript{19} Although 1 March 1869 was the Northern Territory’s first public holiday, the first significant public celebration occurred on the Queen’s Birthday public holiday on 24 May. In keeping

\textsuperscript{13} Some of Goyder’s survey party had been part of South Australia’s first attempt at settlement at Escape Cliffs (1864–1866). Consequently, they were familiar with some of the Aborigines at Palmerston.
\textsuperscript{14} Jones, Ochre and Rust, 137.
\textsuperscript{15} Daniel D Daly, Palmerston, Letter to his sister, 23 June 1869, Mortlock Library, SLSA, Adelaide.
\textsuperscript{16} George Price Deane, ‘Diaries of George Deane, 1868–1869’, 25 March 1869, Mortlock Library, SLSA.
\textsuperscript{17} Wells, ‘Negotiating Place in Colonial Darwin’.
\textsuperscript{18} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{19} A map of the ‘Town Camp’ includes a ‘Gymnasium’. Although I have found no further references to it, it is further evidence of the importance of physical activity and sport to the early settlers. NTG, Department of Planning and Infrastructure, NT Land Information System, Historic Maps, Town Camp, C10.
with British tradition, the day was celebrated with a ‘sports’ day. William Hoare wrote in his diary:

A day of great rejoicing Racing, jumping jacks, 3 legged race, Diving, Swimming, Throwing 14lb weights, high Jumping, Rifle & Revolver shooting Everyone enjoyed themselves in the Camp. I subscribed 10/- by an I.O.U. A large bonfire was lighted at night amidst much cheering.20

Plate 4: First camp at Port Darwin likely to be Goyder’s camp. View is from Fort Hill. (Unknown, Roger Nott Collection, NTL, PH0002/0161)

The day’s celebrations were curtailed upon hearing word of the spearing earlier in the day of survey draftsman, J W O Bennett, at Fred’s Pass.21 The day’s events poignantly juxtapose the familiarity, joy and celebration of the sports with the fear,

21 Chapter Four, ‘Spearing Bennett’ in Jones Ochre and Rust, 2007, 131–187, examines the circumstances surrounding Bennett’s death in detail.
surprise and uncertainty upon hearing the news. It would be a turning point in Black–White relations. In response to Bennett’s death, Daniel Daly, a second-class surveyor, reflected the attitudes that prevailed of the Blacks who ‘appeared so quiet at first have turned most treacherous and savage.’ Daly, distressed by Bennett’s death, also revealed that the class-consciousness that pervaded British society was prevalent even within the tiny isolated community of Palmerston. He described Bennett as ‘a thorough gentleman (one of the few in this expedition)’ but added,

My only regret in having joined in this expedition is that there are very few (two or three at most) who have the feelings or consideration for others’ feelings of gentlemen, I have had many a pleasant evening with men who would never be admitted into society.

Social activity in the camp waned following Bennett’s death and was only reinvigorated with the opening of ‘Theatre Royal,’ named after the Royal Theatre in Adelaide. The first public performance on 4 August was a ‘niger [sic] entertainment’ and a complete success. ‘Nigger’ minstrel entertainments were a mainstay of Palmerston musical performances until World War I and continually reinforced the ethnocentric superiority of the White settlers while also perpetuating Black stereotypes. The enthusiasm for the minstrel shows matched the expectations and thoughts of many in Palmerston who imagined themselves to be living in the plantations of the American South or the British Caribbean.

Captain Bloomfield Douglas, the Government Resident, arrived in Port Darwin in April 1870. He was accompanied by his wife, her maid, and his seven children, the eldest being Harriet and Ellen (Nell). Harriet later married Dominic [Daniel] Daly, a

22 Daly, Palmerston, Letter to his sister, 27 September 1869, Mortlock Library, SLSA, Adelaide.
23 Ibid.
24 Hoare, Diary, 4 August 1869.
25 The Times, 7 January 1915. The Darwin Workers Amusement Club concert featured ‘nigger minstrel and coon songs’.
member of the original survey party. She left a record of her time in Port Darwin in "Digging, Squatting, and Pioneering Life in the Northern Territory of South Australia." Her first impressions of Palmerston in 1870 would mirror those of many who followed:

The scene of our exile — for such we deemed it then — though surprisingly beautiful in itself, was from this very loneliness, hardly inviting … for we were at the time far too strongly attached to the pomps and vanities of this wicked world to appreciate being banished from all we had enjoyed so keenly.26

Darwin was ‘exile’, a foreign land, much closer to Asia than Adelaide. This foreign or exotic ‘otherness’ was a significant factor in how the people of colonial Northern Territory related to their new home and framed their relationship to it. From the earliest White accounts of Palmerston, images of the ‘exotic’ environment and its ‘savage’ Black inhabitants were contrasted with the lives of the stoic British ‘pioneers’ in their quest for ‘civilisation’ and ‘progress’. In the absence of familiar geographical, environmental or cultural markers in the landscape, ‘sport in particular embodied familiar and reassuring elements of “home” that were necessary to ease the transition to a new colonial setting’.27

Douglas’s arrival gave immediate impetus to Palmerston society, in that it provided the small community some sense of social order and respectability so important to Victorian society. The Government Resident provided a focal point to the local social and administrative elite and their sporting activities. Throughout the Empire, British governors patronised and participated in sports whenever opportunities arose. As the highest-ranking official and head of society, a reputation as a sportsman

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26 Mrs Dominic D Daly, "Digging, Squatting, and Pioneering Life in the Northern Territory of South Australia" (London: Samson Low, Marston, Searle & Rivington, 1887), 44.
facilitated acceptance and integration into the community.\textsuperscript{28} The Misses Douglas were active and keen sportswomen and soon after their arrival their police escort, Edward Catchlove, was employed to erect shooting targets for them.\textsuperscript{29} The Douglas’s necessity to practise their shooting was not just a recreational activity. Their riding excursions always had a police escort indicating that in the early years of Palmerston’s settlement a sense of insecurity prevailed. Daly’s mixed feelings towards her Black neighbours were typical. ‘Here the aboriginal presented himself in an entirely new aspect. We were smaller in number, they the greater, and moreover this crowd of savages was armed to the teeth.’\textsuperscript{30} Paradoxically, the perceptions of insecurity led to a commensurate increase in armed escorts, which allowed Blacks to accompany Whites as invited or uninvited companions in many activities.

\begin{figure}[h]
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Plate_5.png}
\caption{Party of people exploring the jungle near Darwin, 1870. (Samuel Sweet, SL SA, B 17389/1)}
\end{figure}

\textsuperscript{29} Catchlove, Edward Napoleon Buonaparte. ‘Dairies of Edward Napoleon Buonaparte Catchlove, Volume 1 1870.’ 1870. Northern Territory Collection, NTL, Darwin.
\textsuperscript{30} Daly, Digging, Squatting, 44–46.
The Douglas family often went on excursions and picnics to Fannie Bay and ‘The Jungle’. They were popular social outings and it was common for such outings to include spontaneous sports that offered informal opportunities for Black and White to play together. Daly noted that these excursions were usually accompanied by ‘a specially chosen escort of larrakias [sic], who never failed to include themselves in what was going on.’ Social Darwinism’s influence cannot be mistaken in Daly’s accounts and familiarity could not be mistaken for respect.

They differed slightly, if at all from the ordinary Australian aboriginal. Just the same low type of physique, the same nomadic habits, the same vices, and the same customs that prevail everywhere else. Darwin's theory of the law of selection seemed to hold good amongst them. The best-looking and the best-made men were invariably the most intelligent and the most active, excelling in all their games and occupations. Some of the young men were really fine, well-made fellows, with curly hair, large black eyes, and shining black skins, lithe and straight as an arrow. Others were lean and ill shapen, and the least interesting specimens of at best an uninteresting race.

Many early accounts of Palmerston ambiguously mention ‘black boys’ as somehow peripheral to riding excursions, hunting, fishing expeditions and picnics. Given the White settlers’ ignorance of the environment, it is more likely that their role was much more significant as guides, advisors and environmental interpreters. An environment described by Whites as ‘jungle’ and the ‘bush’ was shaped by Black land management practices for centuries and for them appeared almost parklike. Despite the persistent Black presence in and around the camp and their contributions to the settlement, Social Darwinism ensured that their important role in facilitating

31 Ibid., 62.
32 Ibid., 67.
33 Jones, Ochre and Rust, 161.
34 Griffiths, Hunters and Collectors, 14.
White survival was ignored.\textsuperscript{35} The continual presence of Aborigines in Palmerston was taken for granted. The very public nature of sport meant that there would have been few White sports activities in Palmerston that were not observed by Aborigines. This also meant that if the opportunity arose they could also participate.

Fannie Bay was a popular picnic destination and the site of Palmerton’s first impromptu horse races and shooting matches. Blacks accompanied the picnic parties and were enthusiastic participants in the horse races. Not surprisingly they were excluded from shooting matches.

A tent was pitched, and dinner served inside it. And then horse racing took place. These were sometimes very amusing, and caused no end of excitement. Willy was one of the jockeys, we found some others amongst the camp boys, and any deficiencies were supplied by putting up a black boy or two. They were ‘stuck on’ fairly well, but sometimes these dusky jockeys fell off during the race. However, they never seemed the least bit disconcerted by their accidents, but got up shaking the sand out of their shaggy black locks, and went off in search of their horses, bringing them back in long after the race was over. The shooting matches were very popular. We emulated Wimbledon by having a running target, and distances of five hundred, one and two thousand yards were fired.\textsuperscript{36}

Daly’s account is further indication that during this period there was a certain freedom between Black and White. The casual inclusion of Aborigines in these outings has none of the hallmarks of later periods when rigid social protocols decreed the maintenance of an appropriate social ‘distance’ between Black and White.

\textsuperscript{35} Ibid., 108.
\textsuperscript{36} Daly, Digging, Squatting, 62.
Palmerston’s social order and expectations were transformed by the arrival of the British Australian Telegraph (BAT) staff in September 1870. They immediately ascended to a privileged social position in the community.

[The BAT] were a most welcome acquisition to our hitherto limited society. They were all young Englishmen, full of energy, and thoroughly enjoying their first experience of Australian Life. The company had provided a billiard-table and a library for use of the officers. These ‘slaves of the lamp,’ as they used to be called, owing to the flashing instrument upon which they sent their messages, had an equal number of hours on and off duty, and in their leisure hours spent their time in boating. They possessed a well-made, comfortable boat amongst the luxuries provided for them; they also went in for riding and shooting.37

The BAT drew its staff from throughout Britain and the Empire and included many graduates of English public schools who were keen advocates of ‘manly sports’. Their colonial counterparts, the Overland Telegraph Department, were also well educated but because they were recruited from South Australia and other Australian colonies, they never attained the same social status or prestige of the BAT. Nevertheless, the two cable establishments were integral to Palmerston’s social elite and they would be in the forefront of sustaining and maintaining the imperial games ethic well into the twentieth century.

In such a small isolated community no opportunity was lost to celebrate its imperial progress. The symbolic rituals of public ceremonies acted as ‘markers’ of progress and provided opportunities for member’s of society to claim their place in the community through public oratory, toasts and public displays of loyalty.38 The planting of the first telegraph pole in Palmerston was cause for great celebration on

37 Ibid., 174.
15 September 1870 and marked the commencement of the line’s construction. Overland Telegraph construction parties worked the length of the Northern Territory but even in the most isolated and unlikely of locations English sporting traditions and rituals were observed.

Christmas Day 1870 came to us at a small watercourse a few miles south of Pine Creek, which was celebrated with customary rejoicing, and that rare faculty that Englishmen have of observing old traditions under entirely new conditions … A concert was held under several tarpaulins erected for the purpose. On Christmas morning a race track was prepared and sports were indulged in consisting of footraces, jumping, putting the stone, grinning through a horse collar, and bobbing at the duff.39

The Overland Telegraph was completed in August 1872. To mark the event, the construction party was granted a banquet on its arrival back in Adelaide, which was preceded by an afternoon of sports where half of the events were reserved for members of the Overland construction party.40

**Sport in Early Palmerston**

Although source material from the 1870 to 1873 period is limited, there is sufficient evidence to indicate that sports were introduced and played at every opportunity. Government Resident Douglas had a billiard table installed at the Residency and a match was played soon after in February 1871.41 Cricket was observed in the surveyor’s camp after work in August 1871.42 An athletics carnival on 31 September 1871 was considered a great success due to ‘all the ladies of Port Darwin being

40 South Australian Register, 5 December 1872.
41 Catchlove, Dairies, Volume 2, 9.
42 Ibid.
present.  

Christmas day in 1871 was celebrated with a shooting match for the Whites and for the first time Blacks were invited to participate in a public community sporting event. ‘The natives were assembled in front of Government Residence, to display their ability in throwing the spear’ at a target featuring the figure of a man. It seems incongruous that the Government Resident, with the task of ensuring friendly relations with the Blacks, would be encouraging Aborigines to target men yet he rewarded the winner, Tommy, with a blanket and a tin of flour. It poses interesting questions about Black and White expectations and assumptions during the early years of White settlement. Whether Douglas or Tommy understood the rifle match and spear throwing competition as a demonstration of the comparative power of opposing weaponry and skills, an acknowledgement of the martial character of relations, or just a ‘sporting’ challenge or gesture will never be known.

The gold rush in the early 1870s was unspectacular by Australian standards, but the rise in population and the publicity gold demanded resulted in significant development in Palmerston and provided the backdrop to the first horse races. Although Catchlove alluded to some races in his diary entry of 9 April 1872, the first report of horse races appeared in the South Australian Advertiser on 17 April 1873. The Port Darwin races on Easter Monday 1873, were attended by ‘almost every inhabitant of the place … and the whole sports passed off well.’ The races were an important marker in the development of the settlement as was the ‘Grand Dinner’ at Crocker’s Hotel that followed. Presided over by Captain Douglas and attended by a crowd of 60 it was as important as the races themselves because of the symbolic connection it provided to familiar British traditions. The meetings and

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43 Ibid.
44 South Australian Register, 23 June 1872.
45 South Australian Advertiser, 3 June 1872. See also Catchlove, Dairies, Volume 2, 48.
46 Catchlove, Dairies, Volume 2, 48.
47 South Australian Advertiser, 14 July 1873. The names Port Darwin and Palmerston were used interchangeably until the name Darwin was formally adopted by the Commonwealth in 1911.
48 South Australian Advertiser, 17 April 1873.
dinners associated with organising and celebrating sports were often more frequent and important than the sports themselves. The membership and control of sporting clubs as an indicator of social status is a continuing theme throughout this study.

Plate 6: ‘Bowerlee,’ winner of the maiden, May 1873. [Palmerston’s First Race Meeting]. (Unknown, SL SA, B 11947)

The race meeting was marked by the first Palmerston sporting photograph of ‘Bowerlee’, the winner of the maiden race, with the jockey and some of the ‘connections’ who are wearing sun helmets. The solar topi or pith helmet was essential tropical equipment and would become associated with Palmerston’s civil servants. The pith helmet was an important imperial symbol for the British who developed the belief that because of their thinner skulls (said to be the result of their superior brain size), they were particularly susceptible to sunstroke and required added protection from the fierce tropical sun. 49 Maintaining the façade of a British

colonial aristocracy was important. Palmerston’s respectable middle class, the public servants in particular, dressed in white suits and solar topis until World War II.

The Northern Territory Times and Gazette was first published in November 1873. It is no coincidence that sport became more organised and stable following its introduction. The Times’s advent was an indicator that Palmerston was acquiring the trappings associated with a colonial ‘capital’ although it only catered for a middle class White readership, which in 1873 numbered 40. The Times and the later The North Australian continued the tradition that had long entwined sport and newspapers and provided a detailed chronicle of Palmerston society and a window to the world during the South Australian administration. It was a particularly narrow view of the small White settler minority and excluded more Whites than it included. Nevertheless, the parochialism of local newspapers meant that sporting events, sports clubs and sportsmen were recorded in a familiar format and style recognised throughout the Empire that continually reinforced the social order, connected them to the outside world and affirmed a sense of imperial progress and continuity.

Early editions included references to billiards, sea bathing, a running match race, shooting matches, a New Year’s Day regatta, and a Boxing Day ‘native muster’. The variety of sporting events indicates that although there are few records, sports became more frequent and organised throughout 1873. In particular, the population increase in the years from 1872 to 1874 resulted in the establishment of a number of hotels in Palmerston, which, similarly to all Australian colonies, played a significant role in the promotion of sports. Australia’s colonial hotels were often the only public place where the community could gather.

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50 Powell, Far Country, 115
51 The Northern Territory Times and Gazette (1873–1932). The North Australian (1883–1889), was incorporated into The Northern Territory Times when it closed in 1889.
52 Anderson, Imagined Communities, 63.
53 ‘Native Sports’ were athletics / sports for Blacks.
The Times carried numerous sports advertisements. These included ‘Foot Races by Aborigines, Climbing Greasy Pole and All Old English Sports to be held at Bieber’s Royal Hotel’ and a ‘Boxing Day Native Muster’ in Palmerston organised by the licensees Beetson and Perrin.\(^54\) Public meetings, sporting clubs, dinners and entertainments were all held at the hotels which were hubs of the town’s social life, but they were largely restricted to males.\(^55\) It was not unusual in South Australia at the time to use Blacks as a form of public ‘entertainment’,\(^56\) and this custom was continued in Palmerston.

W H Garson, of the Hotel Palmerston on the Esplanade, advertised in early Times editions ‘a good pathway leading down from the hotel to a fine bathing place — a distance of about 200 yards.’\(^57\) At the time of Palmerston’s White occupation, swimming was a popular and acceptable recreation for men and women throughout Australia.\(^58\) Palmerston posed some real perils for swimmers. The most obvious were crocodiles, and other sea predators such as sharks. There was also the annual venomous jellyfish migration, which was unknown at the time.\(^59\) Large tidal shifts of up to seven metres also made the provision of safe swimming areas very difficult. Nevertheless, people lobbied for safe swimming enclosures from the earliest settlement.\(^60\) The proposed swimming enclosure was not constructed until 1880,

\(^{54}\) Northern Territory Times, 26 December 1873. Greasy pole events were part of sports days at least until the 1960s when Ted Egan was superintendent of the Yuendumu community. Colin Tatz, correspondence to the author, 19 June 2008.


\(^{57}\) Northern Territory Times, 7 November 1873.

\(^{58}\) Gender segregation for swimming was common throughout Australia. Women’s participation in swimming is outlined in Marion Stell, Half the Race: A History of Australian Women in Sport (North Ryde: Angus and Robertson, 1991), 4–7.

\(^{59}\) The Australian box jellyfish, *Chiropsella bronzie*, are known locally as ‘stingers’. John Bennett was one of the earliest White victims of a stinger attack when stung during his sojourn at Escape Cliffs. See Jones, Ochre and Rust, 166. Fredrick Harwood 14 or 15 years old, was one of the first to die from stingers at the Fort Hill baths. Northern Territory Times, 25 November 1892.

\(^{60}\) South Australian Register, 27 February 1873. In February 1873 Mr A Gore, a Palmerston merchant, returned to Adelaide and gave a lecture on Palmerston’s development. ‘With reference to bathing he
despite the obvious dangers. Although swimming was a popular activity in Palmerston, it would not become a competitive sporting activity until World War I.

Plate 7: [Fort Hill Baths, Palmerston, constructed in 1880s]. Note that the tide is right out. We have a rise and fall of nearly thirty feet. It is rather risky bathing in the open on account of sharks, alligators, also jelly fish during the wet season. (Unknown, Vic Dunn Collection, NTAS, NTRS 2001, No 18)

**Holiday Sports**

As 1873 drew to close and the Christmas and New Year holiday season approached, The Times indicated that sport had become firmly established in Palmerston and the goldfields area. One of the first editions of The Times carried a brief report of the improvised sports at the Royal Hotel, Southport, on the Prince of Wales’s birthday 1873.  

The goldfields settlements were little more than mining camps but the holidays offered a rare social diversion and a reminder of a more ‘civilised’ world. ‘A few of the residents at Yam Creek thought it would be well to lighten the burden of their miserable existence in the wilderness by holding a series of sports at Christmas.’

Southport also featured Christmas day ‘sports’ which included

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61 *Northern Territory Times*, 14 November 1873.
62 Ibid., 16 January 1874.
athletics, a horse race and a ‘Native Race’ of 100 yards won by Ben Muck. The local correspondent noted that the event attracted the entire White population of the region, as would often be the case throughout the colonial period.

People from the neighbouring camps soon came flocking on to the ground, and amongst the visitors I noticed several from the Fountain Head reef, John Bull Reef, Howley, the Shackle, and Sandy Creek. … Mention must not be omitted of the fact that the whole female population of Yam Creek (two) turned out adding grace and beauty to the scene.63

There was a carnival atmosphere throughout the day. Events included three-legged races, quoits, and a potato race, jumping in sacks, a wheelbarrow race and a bottle race. The New Year’s running and swimming match, the Northern Territory’s first biathlon, consisted of 50 yards run to a billabong, a 120 yard round swim and the 50 yards home. The Wheelbarrow race followed, ‘causing great laughter and in fact so much so that it was doubted if the starter and two judges (all rather corpulent) had not injured their health by it.’64 The report is typical. Correspondents recorded the events in detail, noting all place-getters as well as a brief description of the races. The participants included the publican, Mounted Police, Overland Telegraph workers, local merchants and miners.65 Reports usually attempted to capture the ‘spirit’ of the day with humorous anecdotes. Correspondents knew that it would take weeks for their reports to be published and possibly even longer for The Times to make its way back to the goldfields where it would be passed from miner to miner playing an important role in identifying the ‘sportsmen’ in the community. Newspapers played a key role in continuously maintaining the memory of the community and ensuring that although they were distant from civilisation they were

63 Ibid.
64 Ibid.
65 Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sport and Leisure Database’.
still recognised and acknowledged as part of it. Athletics or sports were generally confined to these holiday events organised by ad hoc committees. The only settlements able to maintain sporting clubs and/or associations were Pine Creek, the main permanent White settlement in the mining province, and Adelaide River, for a short time at the peak of the northern railway construction between 1886 and 1888.

The pattern of Palmerston’s sports and public entertainments followed that of new British settlements anywhere in the Empire. For Palmerston, selected because of its fine harbour and reliant on shipping for all its goods and communication, this meant a focus on the harbour, considered ‘only second to any in the world for either rowing and sailing matches’. Regattas were a popular sporting event and civic ceremony throughout the British Empire providing an opportunity to display and reaffirm its seafaring heritage and loyalty to the crown. Palmerston residents certainly embraced their first regatta as a symbol of their British maritime heritage.

It has been decided to inaugurate the New Year with a Regatta, to be held at Port Darwin on the 1st January … Nearly all towns of any extent situated ‘by the sea,’ have their annual competitions, in which yachts, ship’s boats, fishing boats, and all kinds of row boats contend for prizes in their respective classes … A large and influential committee has been organized, and an excellent programme will be submitted, including one sailing match, four rowing matches, diving match, tub races, duck hunt, &c.

The recreation of a familiar British sporting and leisure calendar that mimicked colonies the world over was an important marker in normalising the social order.

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67 Northern Territory Times, 14 November 1873.


69 Northern Territory Times, 5 December 1873.
Events such as the Port Darwin Regatta not only provided continuity and certainty but constant opportunities for public display in a context that confirmed ‘social tone triumphed most where the accompanying display mattered more than the activity itself’.  

The ‘large and influential committee’ would be the first of many formed in Palmerston to organise sporting events. The committee’s nature and function were apparent from this first meeting. The Times reported that the meeting at Garson’s Esplanade Hotel considered at length the ‘true definition of the word “amateur,”’ a subject of discussion amongst British sportsmen the world over. There can be little doubt that the committee included advocates of manly sports familiar with the ‘amateur vs professional’ debate. Conducting the discussion over a few drinks at the hotel was as much about establishing their own ‘credentials’ as gentlemen than a genuine concern about the regatta itself, indicating that muscular Christians, or homo ludens imperiosus, had arrived in Palmerston. Their presence meant that the very brief ‘freedom’ for Aborigines during the establishment of White settlement ended. As a British colonial settlement, segregation, and where possible, the exclusion of Aborigines, was necessary. Although the proximity of Blacks to the initial settlement of Palmerston was tolerated, as the settlement grew there was growing pressure to remove them. There was no recognition that Blacks had any right to be in Palmerston, or to maintain their own social and cultural activities, despite the evidence that they did so.

70 Lowerson, Sport and the English Middle Classes, 24.
71 The Regatta committee included G.B Scott, the Government Resident, as patron, John Lindsay, a commercial agent, as president, John Frew, manager of the English, Scottish and Australian Bank as treasurer, Capt Hunter, a mariner, as judge and George Perrin, a licensee, as secretary. The committee also included G.T Clarkson, the publisher of Northern Territory Times, civil servants, and local businessmen.
72 Northern Territory Times, 28 November 1873.
73 The term homo ludens imperiosus was coined by J A Mangan, ed., The Cultural Bond, 1, and is discussed at length in Chapter 3. It is an extension of homo ludens, or “Man the Player,” from the book of the same name by Johan Huizinga, Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture (Boston: Beacon Press, 1955, c1950).
For some time their camps were permitted to be rather close to the township, but the night having been rendered hideous by continual yelling, occasioned by weddings, quarrels, or corroborees, their removal to a more remote distance was considered necessary to the quiet of the community.  

‘Native’ Sports

A ‘Native Muster’ conducted by Mr Bieber of the Royal Hotel was one of the biggest events of the 1873 Christmas holidays but also the last of its type. The report demonstrates how Blacks were portrayed, with little empathy and as ‘others’ to be observed at a distance.

… when about 2 o’clock the natives of the Larrakeyah [sic] tribe were marshalled by Messrs. Beetson and Perrin to commence their spear throwing, and this opened the games which had been arranged in honour of Christmas and its festivities. There was not a large number of natives present — probably not more than 50 or 60 — as there is only one part of the tribe which remains in the neighbourhood of Port Darwin … But amongst those present there were some very smart men. They are lithe, and active with cheerful faces; and they will stand a very fair comparison with any of the native tribes of the interior. … They are certainly not wanting in intelligence, and the readiness with which some of them can learn anything which may be taught them is remarkable. Of course they are not fond of work; but in this matter they only resemble other people who live in North Australia.  

The imagery used in the representation of Black athletes in the Northern Territory is one of the most important indicators of contemporary attitudes and social change. By

74 South Australian Advertiser, 3 July 1874.
75 Northern Territory Times, 2 January 1874.
comparison, to later reports this is a relatively positive representation of the Larrakia. As racial attitudes hardened, the imperative to make distinctions between wild ‘natives’ or ‘savage’ Blacks with better trained and disciplined Whites became more important to preserving White self-image and their racial social order.\textsuperscript{76} The ‘Native Muster’ was the last separate Black sporting event or ‘amusement’ recorded in Palmerston. Although occasional ‘native sports’ would remain a feature of ‘up-country’ sporting events, Black involvement in sport became strictly controlled and restricted to segregated voyeuristic ‘entertainments’ to bolster and protect White self image and prestige until the turn of the century. Direct competition between Black or non-White athletes and Whites was very rare. There was no time in the Northern Territory during the South Australian administration that equates to the period of freedom enjoyed by Black athletes in other colonies where they

\begin{quote}
were very much ‘gladiators’, objects to be bribed and bet on; but they were also free to be human beings, to socialise with competitors, to be courted by the fans, to be allowed a room in a hotel, to fraternise with the ladies, to be served in public places’.\textsuperscript{77}
\end{quote}

Although there are rare glimpses of the freedom to compete against Whites experienced by Black athletes in other colonies they are atypical. Northern Territory Aboriginal sportsmen did, however, share in the experience of being treated as a ‘special breed’ of gladiatorial entertainers.\textsuperscript{78} Rather than being given the status of contestant, they were anonymous actors in a public spectacle for the amusement of Whites.

Black motivation to participate in sports can only be speculated upon. Many were probably interested in the meagre rations on offer as cash prizes and/or clothes,
tobacco or food.\textsuperscript{79} While meagre, they were significant at a time when there was no other support provided for Blacks who generally lived in poverty on the fringes of society, reliant on occasional paid work, charity and whatever food they could obtain from hunting and gathering. Others may have seized upon the rare opportunity to interact with Whites in a different setting beyond the constraints usually imposed on them, and take centre stage when there was constant pressure to move them to the periphery of White settlement. If there was any sense of ‘hunger for self-display or revenge’,\textsuperscript{80} or that the sports field was a stage to proclaim their survival and resistance to dispossession it would not be until the twentieth century that this found full expression.

\textbf{Plate 8: Corner of Mitchell Street and the Esplanade, 1873. (Middleton Collection, MAGNT, 015/028).}

The advent of more organised and structured sport was a sign that transition from precarious colonial outpost to established colonial settlement was well under way. The immediate establishment of sport and the enthusiasm to participate was an important means for Whites to claim the physical and social environment of Palmerston and transform it into the British community they imagined. The early caution in race relations, caused by a perceived Black threat that underscored early insecurity amongst White settlers, was gone. White settlers had imposed their

\textsuperscript{79} Ibid., 262. In a rowing race on Moreton Bay 1848, Aboriginal rowers were given clothes instead of the prize of money on offer.

\textsuperscript{80} Hoberman, Darwin’s Athletes, 109.
authority and control over the Palmerston area and the Larrakia and others could no longer physically challenge them, having to rely on other means to negotiate their presence in Palmerston. By the close of 1873, Palmerston, propelled by a short gold rush, would revert to conventional colonial attitudes and relegate Blacks to an underclass of fringe dwellers in their own country and a ‘problem’ to be solved, as had occurred throughout Australia. Sports from 1873 onwards began to develop the characteristics that would continue until 1911. The new town was an exclusively White domain where Blacks, Chinese and ‘others’ were segregated and controlled to ensure they were only able to participate under strict conditions.
Chapter 3: Homo Ludens Imperiosus in the Northern Territory, 1874–1900

In Palmerston we provide separate funds for aboriginal events, and the system works well enough for all concerned.¹

Homo ludens imperiosus

The White occupation of the Northern Territory from the 1870s corresponds with Britain’s ‘Age of Empire’.² It was a period of unprecedented social, political and technological convergence that included the development of modern sport driven by ‘the transformation of the rural economy, industrialisation, urbanisation and the expansion of the middle class and its quest for respectability’.³ British Imperialism resulted in the extension of Britain’s military, economic and political power across the world and although it is a multifaceted phenomenon it is ‘social imperialism’ that is the main concern here.⁴ Sport was an essential part of the social framework that supported British colonies throughout the world. J A Mangan writes extensively on this theme and emphasises that by the late nineteenth century sport lay close to the heart of British imperial culture. It formed a distinct, persistent and significant cluster of cultural traits isolated in time and space, possessing a coherent structure and definite purpose. While it had many cultural functions, it had certainly become a means of propagating imperial sentiments.⁵

¹ Northern Territory Times, 7 December 1894.
⁴ Hobsbawm, The Age of Empire, 69.
⁵ Mangan, The Cultural Bond, 1.
As an essential part of British culture, sports were imbued with a spiritual and moral dimension that deeply affected ‘character’ and the diffusion of sport throughout British dominions.6 Sport and the so-called ‘games ethic’ were an integral part of the British imagined community and its invented traditions and language gave a meaning, connection and unity with ‘home’ that transcended and counteracted physical remoteness and social isolation. It evolved from an exclusive activity — confined largely to males of the British public schools and bourgeoisie — to an increasingly expanding middle- to working-class international phenomenon that provided a means for people of differing social standings and women to bond and engage with each other and within society.7 Mangan labelled the archetypal Imperial sportsman *homo ludens imperiosus*, a ‘man [of] firm duty, confident ambition, moral intention and applied athletics’.8 Although only an ideal he was an essential element in the construction of a British–imagined community and a critical social agent in Northern Territory colonial society.

This chapter traces the development of sport in Palmerston and the Top End of the Northern Territory from 1874 to 1900 and outlines the social milieu that enabled *homo ludens imperiosus* to thrive. It is not a detailed account of the evolution of individual Northern Territory sports or a series of biographies of prominent sportsmen, although it is hoped that the appendices provide a useful guide to further research. Through a series of sporting snapshots, it examines sport’s role as an essential agency in establishing and sustaining a social framework upon which to build a ‘British community’. It considers the important collective signs and symbols that encouraged White solidarity based upon the exclusion, segregation and demeaning of Blacks and ‘others’. Women and non-Whites were rarely part of this milieu mirroring the power and authority in society generally.

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By the 1880s, the influence of homo ludens imperiosus was widespread. In Adelaide W H Bundey, Attorney-General, South Australia gave a public lecture, *Manly Sports*:

> the encouragement and practice of these [manly] sports are justified and desirable upon much broader and higher grounds than mere amusement, and that systematically and properly pursued they are grand auxiliaries to the performance of men's duties, and to the formation of their characters.

The most important justification of sport in the eyes of muscular Christians and manly sports advocates was the development of character. Field’s *Toward a Programme of Imperial Life*, described character as a ‘highly charged term for the late Victorians, usually connoting portentous significance, whatever the context’ and that it was, ‘the key to social, national, or racial supremacy, success and survival’. *Homo ludens imperiosus* provided a template for British colonialists and, as such, it demanded conformity of its adherents and intolerance of those who did not. It acted as a means of defining and controlling those within its domain as much as it differentiated and excluded those outside its symbolic boundaries. Although it was taken for granted that sports ‘induce good feeling and fellowship between all classes’, non-Whites were never part of the British imagined community. Hoberman contends that within the ‘cult of masculinity’ the ‘colonial mentality simply could not grant full manhood to nonwhites’. In the Northern Territory, advocates and disciples of manly sports embraced the racism inherent in the imperial

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11 Ibid., 231.


13 Hoberman, *Darwin’s Athletes*, 101.
games ethic, and took it to extremes. At a time when Blacks were competing with relative freedom in mainstream events in other Australian colonies, the racial segregation of Northern Territory sport was rarely challenged. In the absence of any significant government Aboriginal policy, or the ameliorating social humanitarian influences that existed in other Australian colonies, sport was an important means of distancing and differentiating Blacks and others from Palmerston White ‘society’. Participation in sport, like work, was strictly controlled and limited by Whites to maintain their hegemony. Black or Chinese participation in White organised sporting events, other than as spectators or in ‘special’ segregated athletics and horseracing, was very rare.

Another essential character dimension of homo ludens imperiosus was a strict morality that required self-denial and rectitude. Although to be manly demanded physicality and a commitment to the games ethic, it was as an antidote and bulwark against the temptations of unwholesome sexuality. In Victorian Britain, lack of sexual control and unmarried sex were constantly condemned. This resulted in the curious paradox of an asexual masculinity. When translated to the colonial context, homo ludens imperiosus was severely tested by contradictory forces and personal dilemmas. During the nineteenth century, many Europeans considered Whites in the tropics a ‘doomed race’ subject to ‘racial degeneracy and dissolution’. There was a fear that some would succumb and ‘go native’ or ‘go troppo’. This included breaking the Victorian social sexual taboos by engaging in illicit sexual relations

16 Mangan, The Games Ethic And Imperialism, 18.
17 Hyam, Empire and Sexuality, 72.
19 Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 80.
20 Hyam, Britain's Imperial Century, 1815–1914, 302.
with native women. Although colonial outposts far from ‘home’ often implied ‘sexual consolations which compensated for boredom, loneliness, hardship and discomfort’, few acts could bring greater social disapproval. The moral outcry was most strident when sexual liaisons resulted in children. Miscegenation was the ‘quintessential taboo’ in White colonial society because it broke so many of its rules and the belief that all mixed race progeny ‘were potentially subversive’. Although it must be recognised that not all White males who spent time in the Territory had sexual liaisons with Aboriginal women, many did. One consequence of the constant dread, which many felt at the possibility of succumbing to ‘temptation’, was reactionary and exaggerated racial attitudes to protect their perceived high moral status and position in society. In the Northern Territory, where White women were always a small minority during the South Australian administration, sport played an important role in maintaining the façade of an orderly British community and personal reputations. It gave continuous opportunities for White men to publicly display and confirm their virtues as manly sports and gentlemen that for many often contradicted their private lives.

The natural home of the sportsman and important agencies within British colonial society were the sports clubs and societies that constantly reinforced the mores of homo ludens imperiosus. For colonial males, the ‘club’ established a social ‘space’ that established and maintained social status as well as reproducing a sense of ‘home’.

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22 Hyam, Britain’s Imperial Century, 1815–1914, 294.  
23 Hyam, Empire and Sexuality, 213.
Insulated against the world outside, barred almost certainly to natives and very likely to females, with its own hierarchy of president, committee and senior members, the club was a comforting enclave of Englishness, its familiar features unchanged whether it was deposited in equatorial heat or near-Arctic cold. It was social centre, library, hotel, town forum, recreation ground all in one.24

In Palmerston the ‘club’ was more an imagined space than a physical one. Being identified a sportsman in Palmerston was an immediate ‘social open sesame’.25 The small White sporting community meant that individuals could join numerous clubs but essentially mix with the same group of like-minded people, constantly reinforcing their credentials as a ‘sport’. The BAT and Overland Telegraph messes acted as clubs for their staff, while sporting clubs and/or committees tended to be impermanent social constructs erected and dismantled according to need, relying on the local hotels as venues. Sport was an essential aspect of their collective identity, which required conformity and order to counter an ‘alien’ environment. It raised morale, gave them a feeling of moral virtue, gave public expression to social relationships and constantly reinforced their collective ideals and status while at the same time distancing ‘others’.

24 Morris, Pax Britannica, 290.
The most common sports in Palmerston from 1874 to 1900 were horseracing, rifle shooting, athletics and cricket. Other less prominent sports were archery, tennis and sailing regattas. Figure 2 below illustrates that sporting participation during the South Australian administration generally followed demographic vicissitudes, peaking in the mid-1880s and 1890s and declining thereafter. During this period, only rifle shooting and cricket maintained regular competitions. Archery and tennis were not considered ‘serious’ but rather ‘social’ activities that allowed women to participate in the company of men. Horseracing, athletics and sailing regattas were organised around annual and/or holiday events and the time invested in the organisation of such events far outweighed the actual activities themselves. Sports committees and clubs were important social institutions. An almost exclusively White male preserve, committee meetings provided regular opportunities for ‘sportsmen’ to meet with each other and constantly display their ‘Britishness’ within the confines of the ritual and etiquette of formal meetings. For Whites, sport was an essential indicator of social integration and acceptance necessitating the exclusion and/or segregation of all ‘others’.

Plate 9: [Group of Palmerston ‘gentlemen’, near a ‘mock’ memorial to local ‘identities’ H W H Stevens, R C S Buckland, J R Hingston, c1895.] (Unknown, SLSA, PRG 280/1/2/232)
Transition: 1874–1880s

The latter part of the 1870s was a period of transition. A survey of the first full year of publication of *The Times* in 1874 indicates that sport was an important but not systematically organised part of Palmerston’s recreation. As the decade progressed, there were a number of short-lived sporting clubs, but none survived into the 1880s. Sporting activities included athletics, billiards, cricket, sporting dinners, gymnastics, horseracing and rifle shooting. *The Times* sports reports are replete with references to Palmerston’s links to the Empire.

In 1874, cricket was amongst the first sports to be organised into a regular competition. Cricket is generally acknowledged as a cultural cement and an important agent in forging imperial bonds. Its unique language and culture is said to act as a moral, social and physical training ground, readily transferred and adopted.

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26 Sport participation is measured by counting each time individuals are reported in sporting items (includes dinners, meetings and sporting competitions.) recorded in newspapers. Where events are recorded in more than one newspaper individual participation is only counted once.
throughout the British Empire. Its vicissitudes acted as a barometer of the ‘Britishness’ of the community until the turn of the century. During the nineteenth century, cricket was one sport where Aborigines participated in various Australian colonies. In particular, the history of Aboriginal involvement in cricket on missions and the first international Australian cricket team to tour England are well documented. Although the belief amongst missionaries and others in most Australian colonies that cricket was a valuable ‘civilising’ tool would have migrated to the Northern Territory, reports of games beyond Palmerston and the Northern Goldfields are rare.

If, as Bill Mandle has argued convincingly, ‘nineteenth century colonists in Australia accepted sport, and particularly cricket, as a means of measuring the health of their society’, then Palmerston was in good health. During 1874 there were four cricket clubs playing each other in Palmerston or Southport: Palmerston, Southport, Quidnune and the Civil Service. The White population at this time was approximately 750. Although it is difficult to imagine a setting more removed from the archetypal English village green than a recently cleared bush block, cricket reports in The Times repeatedly linked the two in the imagination. Cricket was universally admired and reports included references to its manliness, fair play, character and Britishness. Manliness is a trait that was particularly imbued through

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30 The traditions of cricket were so strong that remarkably, Palmerston cricketers insisted in playing cricket during Christmas holidays and the ‘Wet’. Although summer was traditionally the cricket season in other Australian colonies December to March was the worst possible time to play in Palmerston because of the extreme heat and humidity. Change was very slow in coming but the Port Darwin Cricket Club resolved the issue with a Solomon-like decision. The 1898 cricket season would finish on the 31st of December and thereafter the cricket season would be January 1 to 31 December.
British public school education and the private schools of the colonies. Many of the Northern Territory’s early sportsmen could be characterised as ‘socially ambiguous’, and evidence of their educational backgrounds is scant. Indications are that many either came from ‘educated’ backgrounds, or purported to, and were well versed in the language and rituals of muscular Christians and ‘manly’ sports.

Plate 10: [Cricket team assembled outside The Residency, c1880.] (Unknown, Spillett Collection, NTL, PH0238/0060).

Although Palmerston was still a very small and somewhat ramshackle settlement, its social events assumed the rituals and neo-traditions practiced throughout the empire. At the 1874 Palmerston Cricket Club Dinner, G B Scott, the Government Resident, commented that

31 Lowerson, Sport and the English Middle Classes, 9.
33 Northern Territory Times, 7 November 1874.
he had been a cricketer for 35 years, and should still be glad to play a game with any one in the south. But in the Northern Territory the weather was rather too hot to admit of his enjoying the game of cricket, though it did not lessen the interest which he took in all manly sports.

It was further reported that one of the umpires, Mr Connor, who, as an old Eton boy, spoke of the manliness of the game of cricket. Englishmen took it with them wherever they went; and in England it did more than anything else to bring the different classes of society into harmony with each other.

Horseracing, like cricket, was close to the heart of homo ludens imperiosus. Palmerston’s first turf club formed in 1874: was short-lived and failed to conduct a race meeting. Despite the lack of an organising club, horseracing remained popular. In 1875, Reverend Archibald James Bogle lamented that his ‘miserable congregation’ was due to most of the population being at the races. The 1876 annual races were the subject of some editorialising by The Times. Similar to that other Imperial standard, cricket, horseracing gave homo ludens imperiosus many opportunities to link the Northern Territory and the Empire.

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34 Ibid., 7 November 1874.
35 Ibid., 17 July 1874.
It is one of the strongest characteristics of the English that wherever they go they carry their national predilections with them, and no change of circumstances of climate appears to affect their love for those national sports for which the mother country has so justly attained a pre-eminence … We trust therefore that all our friends will put their shoulders to the wheel and by hearty cooperation with the committee assist in making the 9th of November a red letter day for Palmerston.37

Horseracing was also popular in the goldfields where there was a significant Chinese mining population. The year 1877 was important as the beginning of a long association of Chinese with horseracing; the Pine Creek and the Union races included a Chinese Trial Stakes for Chinese ‘jocks’, won by the influential miner, Pin Que.38 Despite continued Chinese support and participation in horseracing, Whites derided their efforts.39

The funniest thing ever seen on a racecourse, and enough of the ludicrous was compressed into the mile-and-a-quarter spin to make a fortune under a circus tent. Description could not do justice to the humour of the thing, and I hope that no future programme will be deemed complete without a race for Chinese. A side splitting farce is a fool to it.

Athletics was the one sport practised since White settlement that included Black participation, although this was usually conditional. British social order in the Territory was seriously challenged in 1874 when Chinese labour was introduced and despite the continuous racial animosity of Whites, the Chinese demonstrated they were willing to join them in sporting events if given the opportunity. As the White

37 Northern Territory Times, 21 October 1876.
39 The North Australian, 15 August 1890.
population became a minority, their response was to construct an ‘us and them’
binary logic that forged closer racial bonds between themselves by increasingly
marginalising and tightening the controls over Chinese, Blacks and ‘others’. This
included sports participation, a domain where Whites could dictate terms even as
their influence in mining and business waned. Sport enabled them to maintain a
sense of control but it was as much about claiming and reinforcing their own social
status and order within the small White community because it denied the social
reality that the non-White majority existed quite autonomously beyond their
imagined social boundaries.

The 1875 Yam Creek sports were notable for two reasons. They were the last
occasion for many years that Black and White would appear in the same races, and
the first to include a separate ‘Coolie’ race, ‘won by a coolie with an
unpronounceable name’.40 The lines of segregation increasingly hardened after 1875
as White solidarity based on Social Darwinism necessitated maintaining their
ascendancy by excluding the ‘lesser breeds without the law’.41

1880s: Consolidation

By the 1880s there was a greater optimism in the Northern Territory due to an
improving economy. Although Palmerston’s sports were well established, they were
not practised regularly. If the first decade of Northern Territory sport was
characterised by its rather ad hoc character, the 1880s marked a period of organised
consolidation reflecting the growth and greater stability of the population. A number
of sporting clubs were established which would become important social institutions
until the turn of the century. These included the Northern Territory Racing Club

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40 Northern Territory Times, 9 January 1875.
41 Harold Perkin, ‘Teaching Nations How to Play: Sport and Society in the British Empire and
The Northern Territory Racing Club was established on 26 April 1882 and its first race meeting was a great success. The annual races were the one event each year that excited the community and brought it together but they also reflected and reinforced prevailing social hierarchies. They attracted large crowds and after 1886 the railway greatly facilitated horses, trainers and spectators from the distant ‘up-country’ districts. Despite the superficial democracy of gambling, the races themselves were restricted to White owners and jockeys who could meet the cost of nomination and/or requirements of the rules. The one exception to this was the regular ‘Chinaman’s’ race. The construction of members’ areas and enclosures segregated the crowds. The racing community outside of Darwin also became more organised. The Northern Territory Goldfields Racing Club would gauge the wealth and productivity of the goldfields until the turn of the century. It had no permanent base as such but moved its race meetings with the ebb and flow of the fields themselves. In the ‘up country’ areas, organising committees of the local horse races or athletics were a virtual White ‘who’s who’ of the region. Demographics ensured that ‘up-country’ race meetings were more inclusive. Even with the participation of many Black jockeys and the obligatory ‘Chinaman’s’ events, Whites tightly controlled the organisation of the races and the associated social events.

Although organised sport was infrequent for most Australian public schoolchildren in the nineteenth century, there were occasional sporting events for Palmerston’s

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42 See Appendix 1: Development of Sports Clubs, 1869–1911.
43 Northern Territory Times, 5 August 1882.
45 Although Black jockeys did occasionally participate in Palmerston races, unlike horseracing in other areas it was more the exception than the rule due to the availability and enthusiasm of White riders.
46 See Appendix 2: Northern Territory Horserace Meetings, 1869–1918.
students.\textsuperscript{47} School cricket matches in 1881 marked the first non-White involvement in cricket. The matches included Arthur Hang Gong,\textsuperscript{48} W Sing and Hi Sing. There were also three players, Johnny, Ned and Paddy who can be assumed to be Blacks because their names were not printed in full.\textsuperscript{49} Evidence also suggests that although Black children were rarely given opportunities to participate in organised sport, they did play their own games.\textsuperscript{50} The extent of non-White sport activity is ‘hidden’ because it was not reported in the newspapers unless it involved Whites. The first report of Black adult cricketers appeared in 1882. The report of the Bankers and Storekeepers vs. All Comers cricket match in \textit{The Times} illustrates why such an event was a rarity.

The two coloured storekeepers whom the innocent All Comers let their enemies ‘ring in’ on them ‘just to make eleven, you know’, managed to put together eight before they were separated. … Storekeeper’s assistant Charlie followed [batting], and immediately afterwards was joined by William — (‘A rose by any other name would smell as sweet;’ so would a nigger) … The ‘cullered genelmen’ had a game to themselves (in which the field reluctantly joined), until they had made eight between them, when lovely, odoriferous William skyed one.\textsuperscript{51}

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item[47] Daryl Adair and Wray Vamplew, \textit{Sport in Australian History} (Melbourne: Oxford University Press, 1997), 134.
\item[48] Arthur Hang Gong was born in 1867, the son of a prominent Darwin Chinese Merchant, Lee Hang Gong and Sarah Bowman, an Englishwoman best known as a midwife. Hang Gong participated in numerous sports alongside Europeans in the 1880s and 90s including cricket, athletics and horseracing. See Carment, et. al., \textit{Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography}, Vol 2, 80–84.
\item[49] \textit{Northern Territory Times}, 6 August 1881, 13 August 1881.
\item[51] \textit{Northern Territory Times}, 23 December 1882.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
Such was cricket’s significance that it was seen as marker in Northern Territory development. Despite the difficulties of distance and communications across northern Australia, the Territory’s first ‘inter-colonial’ cricket match in 1889 took place when a team from the West Kimberley played Port Darwin. It provided an opportunity for Palmerston’s cricketers and White society to demonstrate their multiple identities as representatives of Palmerston, the Northern Territory and the Empire. According to the *North Australian*, the win for Port Darwin and the scoring of Palmerston’s first century by J C Hendry was a proud day for the community. The fact that the game occurred at all was noted with interest in Victoria and considered testament to northern development.52

The most significant economic event in the 1880s was the construction of the Palmerston to Pine Creek Railway and wharf between 1886 and 1889. This was a major boost to the economy and greatly increased the Chinese population, who made up the majority of the labour force. Increased economic activity and population growth saw a corresponding increase in interest in sports generally, most notably pedestrian match races. Black athletes were involved in some of these wagers

52 *The North Australian*, 14 September 1889.
although it only emphasised their gladiatorial status, subservient role and lack of opportunities in a society where many regarded them as chattels.

A hurdle race was run on Monday afternoon between blackboys owned respectively by W. Lawrie, G.H.H. Lamond, and J. Peperill, 120 yards, for a small sweepstake. After a great race between the dusky representatives of the Palmerston Butchery, the former won by about a yard. The third nigger came to grief early in the race.53

Nothing is known of the Black athletes who participated but newspaper reports of non-White participation often contained representations that displayed an element of ‘social savagery’.54 Unlike Whites, Blacks and other ‘aliens’ were not named individually in sports reports. Reports routinely used pejorative stereotypes to ridicule non-Whites. ‘The black boys also had a scamper. One was first, but we cannot spell his name; it sounded like ‘Hulla bulloo’.55 As Campbell Macknight observed, ‘when Aborigines were inconvenient or hostile, they were ‘niggers’; as useful adjuncts to European schemes, they were ‘boys’,56 in sport they were relegated to ‘novelty’ events at the end of the sports or as diversions during the ‘main’ events. Their participation was deliberately marginalised and their humanity denied. Although the motivation of non-White participation in sports is problematic, what is indisputable is their continuous involvement. Despite the barriers placed before them and their status as entertainers that ignored their athletic prowess, non-White participation at public sporting events as spectators and participants was always high. The diversity of Northern Territory sports crowds was always a point of comment in newspaper reports, although it was rarely positive.

53 Ibid., 17 November 1888.
55 Northern Territory Times, 5 November 1881.
In the 1880s, sport imposed itself physically on the Palmerston landscape with the development of such sporting facilities as a cricket oval, rifle range and tennis courts. This had the effect of fencing off parts of the landscape and extending the town boundaries, further marginalising the Black population and pushing them to the fringes. A cricket ground was an essential component of any self-respecting British colonial town. One of the cricket club’s earliest initiatives was to establish a cricket ground on the esplanade which would be the focus of the town’s sporting activities until the 1950s. The ground not only gave community sport a focus it was credited with improving both the quality of the sport and the town’s general appearance.

Plate 12: Port Darwin Tennis Club, [c1890s]. (Unknown, NTG Photographer Collection, NTL, PH0136/0001)

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57 Northern Territory Times, 23 July 1881. The Palmerston Rifle Club constructed its first rifle range in July 1881.
58 Ibid., 1 June 1883.
Tennis courts also began to be built at this time.\textsuperscript{59} The first evidence of tennis in Palmerston was in 1882 when it was observed that the officers of the Eastern Extension and China Cable Company (BAT) had a fine lawn tennis court.\textsuperscript{60} Tennis was a private pursuit of the wealthy and was popular because it was one of the few sports deemed ‘respectable’ for women. Manly sports by definition were not intended for women. It denies any role for them other than as ornaments to the game who ‘lent a civilising and festive atmosphere to sport’.\textsuperscript{61} Marion Stell argues that ‘a conspiracy of silence has enshrouded the deeds of colonial sports women’.\textsuperscript{62} Certainly, the Northern Territory conforms to her observation that public references to women’s participation in sport were often ill-informed, patronising and concealed the full extent of their participation.\textsuperscript{63} A cricket report of the Queen’s Birthday holiday game, 24 May 1879, was typical:

During the match the ground was visited by a large number of the fair sex, which no doubt had much to do with the result being such a spirited contest — with the eyes of the fair sex gazing on our athletic performances, one and all felt stimulated to exert themselves to the utmost.\textsuperscript{64}

Women did become more active in ‘social’ sports in the 1880s. Initially, tennis in Palmerston appears to have been limited to the BAT — which is not surprising because the construction of private sporting facilities was a feature of the urban

\textsuperscript{59} Tennis is unique in Northern Territory sports history because its arrival approximated that of other Australian colonies. The first All England Championship at Wimbledon was in held in 1877. The first purpose built tennis courts in Australia were built in 1878, at the Melbourne Cricket Ground on asphalt and lawn courts were established adjacent to the Sydney Cricket Ground by the Sydney Lawn Tennis Club in 1880.

\textsuperscript{60} William J Sowden, The Northern Territory as It Is: A Narrative of the South Australian Parliamentary Party’s Trip and Full Descriptions of the Northern Territory; Its Settlements and Industries (Adelaide: W.K Thomas & Co, 1882), 137. Indications are that the court was built earlier than this but no evidence can be found to verify a construction date.

\textsuperscript{61} Ryan, The Making of New Zealand Cricket, 24

\textsuperscript{62} Stell, Half the Race, 1.

\textsuperscript{63} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{64} Northern Territory Times, 31 May 1879.
middle class in England at the time. The same year the Palmerston Tennis Club was
established, it encouraged male members to bring one or more ladies to play.67
Despite the club’s formation and the call to convene a Lawn Tennis Association in
May 1886, tennis disappeared from the sporting landscape until the mid 1890s.
Similarly, to non-White sporting participation, women’s sport was often ‘hidden’
because it was not played publicly and therefore largely ignored by male newspaper
 correspondents. An insight into the hidden world of women’s tennis is found in the
correspondence of the Government Resident and his daughter-in-law Emilie between
1890 and 1892. ‘There is a capital lawn tennis court with a cement floor to which the
best girls have the entrée on Tuesday afternoons and afternoon tea is also served.’68
Knight later became a sporting ‘gatekeeper’, using the Government Residence tennis
court as a social sanction. ‘I am in hot water with some of our so-called society —
and I have closed the tennis court against them … we are getting divided into two
sets as formerly — & I am with the people.’69 This is a good example of the way
White males used sport as a means of social control by restricting access to sporting
facilities not only on the basis of race but also gender. This control did not diminish
until well into the twentieth century.

65 Lowerson, Sport and the English Middle Classes, 9.
66 Northern Territory Times, 13 June 1885.
67 The North Australian, 3 July 1885.
68 J G Knight, Letter to Emilie, 18th August 1890, NTRS 1826/P1, NTAS, Darwin.
69 Ibid., 21 April 1891.
Plate 13: Tennis court, possibly attached to the Wesleyan Chapel, [c1890s]. (Unknown, Marie & Lindsay Perry Collection, NTL, PH0560/0027).

The advent of the Palmerston Archery Club encapsulates the desire amongst some in the community to recreate the ‘British’ upper middle class social order. The club drew its members from the upper echelons of the civil service and their families. Archery, like tennis, was one of the few participant sports in the late nineteenth century considered ‘suitable’ for women and which allowed them to play with men. It appealed to those who aspired to the lifestyle, genteel behaviour and etiquette of the English country gentry.70 The first competition shoot on the cricket ground was on 15 April 1886.71 Most Archery reports were dismissive, reflecting how women were perceived in not only sport, but also society generally. As was always the case Blacks observed all the sports on the oval and their children were clearly interested in the activities of the Palmerston Archery Club. ‘Some of our youthful aboriginals, following the example set by the Archery Club, going in for the manufacture and use of the bow and arrow. The imitative proficiency of Port Darwin niggers is

70 Lowerson, Sport and the English Middle Classes, 101.
71 Northern Territory Times, 17 April 1886.
proverbial.' The Palmerston Archery Club continued at least until 1890, and then faded from public view.  

Rifle shooting was one of the more popular and organised sports in Palmerston during the 1880s. The sport was reinvigorated by the formation of the Palmerston Rifle Club in July 1881 and the construction of a new rifle range at the edge of town. In 1882, the Government commissioned a report into the formation of a rifle company in the Northern Territory following the Palmerston Rifle Club’s application by Col. M F Downes, for a set of targets and the supply of free ammunition. The submission to the Government Resident reflected both the imperial importance

Plate 14: Palmerston Archery Club, [c1886]. (Paul Foelsche, SLSA, B 24245)

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72 The North Australian, 25 June 1886. The town oval was situated on the escarpment, above Lameroo beach, which was the most populous Aboriginal camp in Palmerston until removed to the Kahlin compound in 1912.

73 Ibid., 28 November 1890. The last report of archery was as part of an ‘entertainment’ given by Mr F E Becker, senior., at Fannie Bay. ‘Such games as tennis, croquet, and archery assisted to cut out the afternoon very pleasantly.’ Archery’s popularity waned around Australia at this time. See Vamplew, et. al., The Oxford Companion to Australian Sport, 17.

74 Northern Territory Times, 23 July 1881.
placed on the cable and the racist paranoia that existed in the minds of many of Palmerston’s citizens.

The formation of some sort of military defence for Palmerston is very essential not only on account of the large number of Chinese and Blacks but because the shore end of the Marine Telegraph requires protection in the event of an attempt being made to cut it as would probably be done if England became engaged in war with a naval power.\textsuperscript{75}

Police Inspector Foelsche was not convinced. ‘What do you want with an armed force? You have no enemies.’\textsuperscript{76} Despite the irrational fears of some, the Chinese community was generally hardworking and law-abiding. Up until 1885, 102 Chinese had applied for naturalisation, indicating a long-term commitment to the Territory.\textsuperscript{77}

A split in the Palmerston Rifle Club in 1887 reflected that social tensions were not confined to inter-racial issues in the tiny White sporting community. After a bitter altercation about suitability, or otherwise, of some newly nominated members, the Port Darwin Rifle Club was formed and soon after developed a second rifle range.\textsuperscript{78} The two clubs coexisted in 1888 but by the 1890s the Port Darwin Rifle Club was the sole club.

\textbf{The 1890s}

The 1890s marked a period of economic depression throughout Australia. Although sports activity often reflects economic conditions, this was not the case for the Northern Territory for most of the period. Numerous sporting clubs — with delusions of regional grandeur that denied their isolation and reality — were formed,

\textsuperscript{75} Col. M F Downes, ‘Report with Reference to Formation of a Rifle Company at Palmerston,’ 6 October 1882, GRIC, A5709, NTAS, Darwin.
\textsuperscript{76} Northern Territory Times, 20 January 1883.
\textsuperscript{77} Jones, The Chinese in the Northern Territory, 42.
\textsuperscript{78} The North Australian, 9 April 1887.
augmenting those established in the 1880s. The most noteworthy was the North Australian Cycling Club (1897).\(^79\) For the Black and Chinese communities there was little change. As federation approached, they remained largely confined to their own sports within their own community or on the fringe of those conducted by the Whites, although there was a glimmer of change.

The 1890s began with a rare example of Aboriginal success in Palmerston’s White sports and offered a glimpse of the relative freedom enjoyed by Aborigines in other Australian colonies.

As will be seen the two principal events fell to a runner named C.A. Murray, a coloured sprinter, who arrived a few weeks ago from Queensland, where he is well known in the tracks. Murray is undoubtedly a good pacer, and fairly flew from his opponents in the champion event.\(^80\)

Very little is known about Murray. There is evidence that he ran professionally in Queensland,\(^81\) where it was common for Aborigines to be a member of a ‘stable’ of runners under the control of a White ‘handler’ or boss.\(^82\) Murray’s arrival in Palmerston went unnoticed prior to the Palmerston New Year Athletic Sports and his fine performances were not easy for some to acknowledge, as indicated by the report of the Champion Race and Palmerston Handicap. The Champions race had ‘a rattling good start … but the race was never once in doubt. Murray took the leading position about 50 yards from home, and simply played with the others.’ In the Palmerston Handicap ‘there were fourteen entries, but the majority declined to tackle the dark one on the terms given’.\(^83\) Murray won prize money of £12 12s, in addition to

\(^{79}\) The North Australian Cycling Club (1897). The Northern Territory Athletics Club (1892). The two clubs merged to become the Northern Australian Cycling and Athletics Association (1902). See Appendix 1A: Northern Territory Athletics and Cycling Clubs, 1869–1911.

\(^{80}\) The North Australian, 3 January 1890.

\(^{81}\) Tatz, Obstacle Race, 91.


\(^{83}\) The North Australian, 3 January 1890.
whatever he won in wagers. But it did not end there. The Kimberley champion, J Armstrong, challenged Murray to a match race the following Tuesday. ‘In this Murray concedes the Kimberlite 2 yards start in 100 yards, the latter putting up £100 to the coloured party’s £80.’ The match took place on the Mitchell Street footpath for a stake of £25 a side and watched by over a hundred spectators. Murray won by three yards. This was a unique occurrence in Territory athletics. It appears that Murray made a calculated and strategic decision to attend the Palmerston Athletics knowing that it was unlikely that anyone would know him as a professional runner. In comparison with Queensland, the quality of Palmerston athletics fields was poor, thereby increasing his chances at success. Certainly, Murray’s success meant that his decision paid handsomely. Unfortunately, there is no evidence to suggest how Murray spent his time in Palmerston, if he travelled alone, or if he met with others socially before or after the athletics. Had Murray been White it is likely that he would have been feted at some dinner or social event. Later reports indicate that Murray continued on to Sydney to compete in professional events at Botany although it was noted that ‘he has failed to secure a heat.’ Murray’s speculative visit to Palmerston appears to have been an aberration but it was the first ‘symbol of possibility’ that non-White athletes could compete on equal terms with Whites and subvert their dominance of Territory sport. When Murray left sports soon returned to the status quo.

More typical and indicative of the frontier attitudes outside of Palmerston was the 1889 Christmas ‘nigger’ sports at Deane’s Camp, Burrundie. Black participation in athletics was cynically voyeuristic in the absence of any other entertainment.

84 Ibid.
85 Ibid., 11 April 1890.
86 Wiggins, Glory Bound, 213.
87 G H Lamond, Tales of the Overland: Queensland to Kimberly in 1885 (Perth: Hesperian Press, 1986), 75, provides a contradictory account of this unusual episode. The account that claims the ‘Darwin Sports’ brought in Floyd, an Aboriginal ring-in from Sydney, is unsubstantiated and could have been an invention by the ‘Darwin sports,’ to cover their embarrassment at being taken to the cleaners by an Aborigine.
The races were well contested, as the prizes were of a kind to appeal to the niggers most vulnerable point very strongly — consisting of bags of flour, bouilli, pipes, and tobacco; the handicapping gave the lubras the best chance, much to the bucks’ disapproval. The spear throwing was the worst we have ever seen, and speaks volumes for the effects of civilization on the blacks.88

In the report of the Palmerston New Year athletics of 1891, it was reported quite matter-of-factly that in the ‘Throwing Cricket Ball’ event the winner was declared to be H F Holt with a ‘fine throw of 106 yards … A blackfellow … after the contest hurled the ball 109 yards.’ To acknowledge Black athletic superiority was anathema to Palmerston’s respectable ‘manly’ sports, whose rhetoric of fair play did not extend beyond their own insularity and hypocrisy. The continuing dialectical contradiction was that Whites could despise, even hate Blacks, yet their conditional participation in sport was essential to bolster their own sense of White superiority. Their imagined community was secure and social order returned when the day was concluded with ‘hurdle and flat races for the natives, young and old, male and female’.89

The Northern Territory Athletics Club (soon after renamed the Northern Territory Athletic Association) conducted athletics in Palmerston throughout the 1890s.90 Athletics under the Northern Territory Athletic Association had settled into an annual routine by the mid 1890s. Christmas and public holidays were the most common dates for country athletics carnivals. The Union, Fountainhead, Pine Creek and Glencoe all staged athletics on holidays during this period.91 The main Northern

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88 The North Australian, 10 January 1890.
89 Northern Territory Times, 9 February 1891.
90 The committee was made of some of Palmerston’s ‘leading’ citizens and civil servants. J G Knight, the Government Resident was patron, V V Brown (Merchant) was president and G W Mayhew (Journalist), was appointed secretary. The committee included Dr L S O'Flaherty (surgeon and Protector of Aboriginals), Gustav Sabine (Government Surveyor), R M Stow, R D Beresford (two of the three Palmerston legal fraternity), J C Hillson and G H, Simms (managers of the two town banks), W Rundle, G McKeddie (Merchants) and J C Hendry (BAT). Northern Territory Times, 9 February 1891.
91 See Appendix 3: Northern Territory Athletics Carnivals, 1869–1918.
Territory Athletic Association carnival was on the Easter long weekend and for a short period The Times gave it a similar status as the Northern Territory Racing Club annual races. Blacks, Chinese and others remained confined to segregated novelty events, continually reinforcing White prejudice and their notions of social order.92

Plate 15: Spectators watching Aboriginal competitors in a race during a New Year sports day at Daly Waters, [c1898]. (W Holtze, SL SA, B 61448)

By the mid 1890s, the growth of Pine Creek, at the centre of the northern goldfields, was reflected in the formation of various clubs and societies, including the Pine Creek Athletic Association in 1894. Its first meeting was enveloped in controversy when, Bismark, a local Black athlete took on Whites in a main event at the New Year’s Sports in 1895.93 As was the custom, Bismark’s nomination was received prior to the meeting. The Times commented, ‘Bismark is, we presume an aboriginal, and if so it is questionable wisdom to receive his nomination. In Palmerston we provide separate funds for aboriginal events, and the system works well enough for

92 Northern Territory Times, 7 April 1893.
93 Ibid., 4 January 1895.
all concerned’. To the chagrin of many, Bismark won the Maiden Plate and the Pine Creek Handicap, beating Becker, the White favourite, and winning £10. The report acknowledged Bismarck’s superior ability. ‘The nigger they say, is a very warm member, and if the times were accurately taken they were the fastest handicap heats ever run in the country.’ The White response to Bismark’s success was to ensure that it could not happen again. The programs for the Pine Creek athletics events in 1896 and 1898, included the clause ‘No aboriginals, or other coloured races, to be allowed to compete in European events.’ Bismark’s brief success, like Murray’s before him, demonstrates that on rare occasions Black athletes were able to prise open the barriers to their participation and they could succeed. The White response to ban Black athletes out of hand demonstrates how sensitive Whites were to any challenge to their ‘carefully cultivated mystique of authority’.

The Northern Territory Athletics Association sports program of 1895 introduced cycling for the first time. Cycling was all the rage in all the Australian colonies at this time following the introduction of the ‘safety’ cycle and pneumatic tyres in the late 1880s. The first ‘safety’ cycles probably arrived in Palmerston in 1894, ordered by ‘enthusiasts’ from the Overland Telegraph Department. A severe cyclone struck Palmerston in January 1897. The town was badly damaged but the sporting and social life recovered quickly. A major event in May was the arrival of Jerome Murif who had cycled from Adelaide. Murif’s feat seemed to prompt a surge of interest in ‘manly’ sports. Cycling eclipsed athletics during this period and it

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94 Ibid., 7 December 1894.
95 Ibid., 4 January 1895.
96 Ibid., 2 October 1896.
97 Ibid., 17 February 1898.
98 Hoberman, Darwin’s Athletes, 109.
100 Northern Territory Times, 16 March 1894.
101 Ibid., 22 March 1897.
included ‘lady’ cyclists. The first cycling match on the town oval in November 1897 prompted the formation of the North Australia Cycling Club on 4 February 1898. In keeping with its ‘modern’ image, the club encouraged female participation by ensuring ‘all lady cyclists be elected honorary members of the club’. Cycling was kept in the public eye when Albert McDonald, a member of the Overland Telegraph Department, cycled across Australia in 1898, setting a new transcontinental record of 29 days from Darwin to Adelaide, making him the Northern Territory’s first athlete to be noted on the national stage.

Plate 16: Albert MacDonald, 1898. (Unknown, NT Transport and Works Collection, NTL, PH0230/0023).

102 Ibid., 19 March 1897.
103 Ibid., 6 November 1897.
104 Ibid., 11 February 1898.
105 Ibid., 23 September 1898.
Cricket was in the doldrums in the early 1890s with ad hoc games played between members of the Port Darwin Cricket Club being the mainstay of the club. To overcome the isolation and absence of genuine sporting competition the game was boosted in mid-1893, with the invention of their own ‘representative’ fixture, the ‘Outcasts’ vs. ‘Electrics’ series. The game, given local ‘test’ status, quickly became the most keenly anticipated cricket games in the 1890s and 1900s. The Electrics were made up of BAT and Overland Telegraph Department workers while the Outcasts were comprised of the rest of the community, reflecting the social hierarchy of Palmerston and the extent to which the ideals of homo ludens imperiosus, had penetrated Palmerston.

How nearly perfect in its own way is cricket, and especially Oxford and Cambridge cricket. It is a game that keeps boys out of mischief. It is a training of youth for a manly life. It lays up a store of strength and health against old age. It makes in divided men lifelong friends. … The truth is that athletics are an integral part and powerful support of all education; they make it popular.\(^\text{106}\)

Despite the rhetoric, cricket participation continued to decline, which may explain why Black cricketers were given a rare opportunity to play. Although conditional participation of Blacks and Chinese was accepted in athletics, it remained rare in other sports. In 1894, two games were played between the town’s merchants and the Overland Telegraph Department. In the first, the P R Allen & Co. team announced before the game included Aboriginal players Burber and Mimatuer, while Nim was selected for the Overland Telegraph.\(^\text{107}\) Nim did not play the game but Dick and Manton, recorded on the score sheet as ‘(ab)’, were included in the team.\(^\text{108}\) The ‘Mercantiles’ were soundly beaten but Burbur took two wickets in the first innings

\(^\text{106}\) Ibid., 15 October 1897.

\(^\text{107}\) Ibid., 26 October 1894. ‘Nim’ is a name often given to Aborigines and thought to mean boy or young boy.

\(^\text{108}\) Ibid., 2 November 1894. Although the use of ‘(ab)’ to identify Aborigines was common in other colonies, it was not in the Northern Territory.
and top scored with Mimateur in the second.\textsuperscript{109} They were again selected to play two weeks later although they batted at ten and eleven and did not bowl.\textsuperscript{110} Significantly, the reports, unlike the first report of Black cricketers in 1882, were free of racist comment. The Black cricketers were probably workers employed at the store and telegraph department who had daily contact with their White employers. This was common at the time and it suggests that there were Whites in the community who displayed greater tolerance. When translated to the sports field it shows that that on a personal level, relationships between Black and White were not always characterised by antagonism, prejudice and exclusion.

A further indication that racial attitudes were changing in some quarters is found in children’s sport which was infrequent during the nineteenth century with the exception of races during the athletic carnivals. In November 1898, The Times reported on the first interschool cricket games in Palmerston between the Public School and the Reverend Father O’Brien’s Private school. The second game was significant because it included the names of Willie Allen and Antonio Spain, both of mixed race backgrounds.\textsuperscript{111} Allen was a Larrakia youth while the Spain family originated in the Philippines. Their sporting experiences through the 1900s, discussed in greater detail in Chapter 5, began to challenge the racist stereotypes that had marginalised Aborigines and ‘others’ in sport in the Northern Territory throughout the nineteenth century.

One of the most significant social changes in the 1890s was the greater role of women. Although their involvement in sport was limited, there were changes in other areas of Palmerston’s leisure activities. On 21 March 1895, South Australia gazetted the Constitutional Amendment Act, which gave South Australian women, including Aboriginal women, the right to stand and vote for parliament.\textsuperscript{112}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{109} Ibid., 2 November 1894.
\item \textsuperscript{110} Ibid., 16 November 1894.
\item \textsuperscript{111} Ibid., 4 and 11 November 1898. Allen played in both games and Antonio Spain in the second.
\item \textsuperscript{112} Barbara James, Occupation Citizen: The Story of Northern Territory Women and the Vote (1894-1896) (Darwin: The Author, 1995), vii.
\end{itemize}
had taken a leading role in musical and theatrical events as singers, actors and musicians since the 1880s, none had served on a committee and only the Palmerston Archery Club, in 1886, had a female executive member.\textsuperscript{113} Options for female sports participation also remained very limited. The 1893 Northern Territory Athletics Association New Year Sports included ‘sprints … for the rising generation, boys, girls, and also for the blacks’.\textsuperscript{114} Another sign of change was the sighting of women cyclists in Palmerston for the first time in 1897.\textsuperscript{115} Needless to say, nothing changed for non-White women. They remained almost invisible to the public gaze.

By the mid 1890s, the Northern Territory Racing Club annual race meeting was well established as the premier sporting and social event. The meeting also gave a significant boost to the local economy of between £2000 – £3000.\textsuperscript{116} In Palmerston, events such as balls, concerts and the Agricultural, Horticultural and Industrial Show were often planned to coincide with the annual races. The success and popularity of the races, despite efforts to segregate them, was also an undeniable reminder of Northern Territory’s multi-racial population. The Times reports of the races rarely failed to comment on the cosmopolitan crowds.

In fact as far as the crowd goes … it was a motley gathering, too, running from the sable aboriginal through various stages of Jap, Chow, Malay, Cingalese, up to the sport-loving Britisher and colonial — a gathering very characteristic of the land we live in.\textsuperscript{117}

The social reality of the Northern Territory’s multi-racial population was denied in the organisation of sport. This was directly challenged only once during the South Australian Administration. The Chinese actively participated in most community sporting events despite continuous discrimination and marginalisation into

\textsuperscript{113} The North Australian, 17 April 1886.

\textsuperscript{114} Northern Territory Times, 20 January 1893.

\textsuperscript{115} Ibid., 19 March 1897.

\textsuperscript{116} Ibid., 23 August 1895.

\textsuperscript{117} Ibid., 14 August 1896.
segregated races. Conventions were overturned in 1899 when the large Chinese mining community that dominated Brocks Creek opened a new racecourse and organised its own races. The program subverted the rigid White control of race meetings by inverting the rules to include an event ‘for horses owned and ridden by Europeans’ exactly the opposite to the situation of the two racial groups at previous meetings.118 The Times rather cynically reported that the meeting was a shambles,119 but the local correspondent was more objective: ‘The crowd consisting of about 200 Chinese, 30 Europeans, including a few ladies, and a numerous gathering of aboriginals being all that could be wished for’.120

In Palmerston, the pearling industry attracted a significant Japanese population in the 1890s.121 They participated in sport on occasions. Sailing regattas returned to the sporting calendar in 1896–99 in response to the activity created by the pearling fleet. Regattas included the usual gig and yacht races for the British contingent but there were also lugger and sampan races for pearlers and Chinese merchants. Charley Hamaura, or ‘Japanese Charlie’ as he was known, was a Japanese pearl boat operator and a key character in these regattas.122 He was a regular in the lugger races and served on the committee in 1898. The involvement of an ‘alien’ in Palmerston’s sporting community was very rare but was acknowledged favourably when he finally left Port Darwin in 1900.123 In effect, Hamaura had been granted ‘honorary’ White status. It was impossible for ‘aliens’ to be accepted on their own terms so Whites anointed those whom they saw as acceptable as ‘one of us’. This social dynamic would become increasingly complex after the turn of the century.

118 Jones, The Chinese in the Northern Territory, 76.
119 Northern Territory Times, 24 February 1899.
120 Ibid.
122 Ibid.
123 Northern Territory Times, 26 Oct. 1900.
Plate 17: Regatta [Pearling Luggers, c1898]. (Unknown, Marie & Lindsay Perry Collection, NTL, PH0560/0060).

Between 1869 and 1900, sport was established and entrenched as an integral part of White society in Palmerston and to a lesser extent the northern goldfields. Although important drivers of sport throughout the British Empire such as, urbanisation and industrialisation, were absent in colonial Northern Territory *homo ludens imperiosus* thrived. Sport was a crucial means of connecting the small isolated White communities to each other and the Empire. Far from ‘home’, the rituals and traditions of sport were embraced by the Territory’s White minority and cushioned them from the isolation they felt imposed by distance, an ‘alien’ majority and an unfamiliar harsh environment. Sport was one part of their domain they could control while also maintaining a social distance from Blacks and ‘others’. In the absence of the ameliorating influences of church, intelligentsia or a critical press they enforced rigid segregation in sport, based on a particularly virulent and stubborn strain of racism underpinned by Social Darwinist ideology. Despite this, there were rare glimpses of Black, Coloured and Chinese assertiveness in the form of C A Murray, Bismark and the Brocks Creek Chinese race meeting. Although non-White sporting successes were few, this both highlighted the powerlessness of the non-White
majority, who had few rights under White domination, and indicated the possibility of change. The turn of the century, the advent of a federated government with its White Australia policy and a continuing economic downturn would see the stability and continuity of sport from 1880 to 1900 replaced by instability and decline. Although White sporting dominance would continue, the combination of a gradual increase in non-White sporting participation and a greater racial tolerance amongst some Whites would result in significant change and the emergence of the Northern Territory’s first Aboriginal sports champion.
Chapter 4: Horseracing on the Northern Territory Frontier, 1869–1911

A horse race is the only source of amusement we have in a place where we live in a Chronic state of Fever & Ague & suffer occasionally from famine.¹

If Palmerston provided a fertile home for *homo ludens imperiosus* to thrive in Australia’s tropical north, then the archetypal characters who dominated the Northern Territory’s frontier frontline were the ‘hard cases’ and ‘practical bushman’. In the euphemistic and obfuscating language of the colonial frontier, ‘practical bushmen’ were men adept with guns and a willingness to use them against Blacks who were resisting pastoral expansion. Rose argues that ‘their practicality required a very narrow definition of the past and a sense of history that detached actions from consequences. Brutality was always said to be in the past; visions of the future demanded that it be forgotten’.² They were further fortified with the conceit of their own racial superiority that justified the ‘greatest violence against Aboriginal people — intimidation, murder, as well as sexual violence and exploitation’.³ Inevitably, bushmen made up the majority of ‘sportsmen’ on the frontier.

Contrary to the popular myth that sport acted as a unifying force in society, it played an essential role in perpetuating racial stereotypes and inequality by creating a symbolic social order that necessitated separate lives for the White minority. The oppression of Aborigines that characterised the frontier meant that there was little space for a ‘normal’ social life. There could be no ‘normal’ sport in an abnormal society. It will be argued that the frontier’s influence on Northern Territory society was complete and that its mores, particularly their extreme views on Aborigines and

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the nature of race relations, percolated into and were assimilated by Palmerston society where ‘practical bushmen’ were held in high regard as the very embodiment of the Territory.

Sport on the colonial frontier, beyond Palmerston, Pine Creek and the northern goldfields, was confined almost exclusively to horseracing in the small and isolated White communities scattered along the Overland Telegraph line, Alice Springs, Borroloola and the Victoria River District. This is not surprising given that horseracing was synonymous with the Australian bushman. It is only natural that a society that made its living on horseback would also occasionally find time to enjoy races, show off its best stock and discuss issues of mutual interest. The development of horseracing in these isolated communities followed the development of White settlement of the Territory frontier and although it provided rare moments of recreation for White settlers, for Blacks it reinforced and exacerbated the cruel realities of frontier life.

Typically, colonial ‘up-country’ race meetings were portrayed as having a carnival atmosphere. William Linklater, a White stockman who lived in the McArthur River district, recalled the Borroloola annual races of the 1890s:

Borroloola consisted of two hotels, three stores, two Government buildings and a few small shacks, but during the period of the races the population of between forty and fifty, including Chinese, would grow by about a hundred, and a hilarious time would be had by all.

What the descriptions conceal is that these hilarious ‘picnic’ meetings were markers of White conquest and an integral part of the set of colonial tropes that distinguish

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4 Prior to the early 1890s, the McArthur River region was often spelt Macarthur River. By 1893, McArthur was adopted. For consistency McArthur will be used unless as part of quotes.

5 William Linklater and Lynda Tapp, Gather No Moss (Melbourne: Macmillan of Australia, 1968), 83.
gentlemen from the natives’. Deborah Bird Rose coined the phrase ‘trophy moment’ to describe an

overkill site, a trophy of nationhood, produced locally. Death was the 'dance' of the frontier, and the trophies went to prove that the evidence of these frontier relationships — that whites and blacks had occupied the same time and place, that one had died and one had conquered — could be produced.

Frontier race meetings are considered here as a sporting trophy moment, a celebration of the imposition of White rule and settlement and the end of Aboriginal occupation and traditional culture. When the layers of nostalgia and romance are removed, frontier horseracing is revealed in a very different light. Race meetings were attended by almost the entire White population of the town and district. Inevitably, this included the Mounted Police and the White pastoralists who were engaged in the frontier violence and repression; many were known killers and participated in punitive reprisal raids, killing or ‘dispersing’ Blacks who resisted them. Although Blacks may have participated in the races as riders, workers and spectators, their involvement was conditional on a construction of frontier power relationships that positioned them as a conquered and subjugated people. As in all colonial sport, there is a profound Black silence surrounding frontier horseracing. Nevertheless, as contested social terrain it is open to multiple interpretations and while Black participation may have indicated a resigned acknowledgement of White settlement, it was equally a signifier of survival, negotiation, accommodation and resistance.

7 Ibid., 150.
8 See Appendix 4: Northern Territory Horseracing, 1869–1918. White Participants Complicit in Aboriginal Deaths and/or Punitive Raids and/or ‘Dispersals’.
Central Australia

The Overland Telegraph, constructed between late 1870 and August 1872, gave the Northern Territory frontier and its settlement a distinctive character. Australian colonial settlement generally extended frontier settlement from a coastal hub. While Palmerston followed this process, the Overland Telegraph resulted in the frontier extending immediately along the line over the length of the Northern Territory. The constant maintenance requirements of the line meant a steady stream of carriers and officials moving up and down ‘the track’, which acted as a ‘safety net in the wilderness’. During the construction phase of the Overland Telegraph, Aborigines were fearful of the construction parties and tended to avoid them. When it became apparent that the Whites intended to stay, Blacks began to interact with the telegraph station staff. Initially, this contact was ‘cautiously friendly,’ but as familiarity grew so tensions developed.

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On 22 February 1874, curiosity was abruptly replaced by violence when the Barrow Creek telegraph station was attacked, resulting in the deaths of two White staff and two Kaytetye attackers. The White response to the ‘Barrow Creek Outrage’ was immediate and deadly and set the tone for Black-White relations until the turn of the century. The Adelaide Advertiser advocated swift punishment.

A heavy blow well struck now may prevent the striking of many blows in the future. We hope Trooper Gasson [stationed at Barrow Creek, but absent at the time of the attack] is not hampered by too many instructions … Retribution, to be useful, must be sharp, swift and severe.12

Hartwig, calculated that over the six weeks that White punitive parties ranged across the district, at least fifty Aborigines were killed. It is possible that up to ninety were massacred at Skull Creek.13 The Barrow Creek attack ended any pretence of conciliation in Central Australia and the commencement of a ‘pacification’ phase until the 1890s. White police and pastoralists on the frontier were reliant on horses. The quality, speed and stamina of their horses were more than a matter of survival. Horses and horsemanship were a matter of pride. Horseracing, introduced into Central Australian in the 1870s, was one way to settle arguments on the merits of horse and rider.

Lorraine Dale claims that the Overland Telegraph staff at Charlotte Waters, on the South Australian-Northern Territory border, organised the first race meeting on completion of the line in Central Australia in 1872. The first Alice Springs race meeting may have been as early as 1873. A racing club, which held a two or three day Christmas race meeting, may have been formed by Ted Bagot, of Undoolya Station, in 1874.14 The first newspaper report of the MacDonnell Range Turf Club’s Christmas race meeting appeared in The Adelaide Observer of 29 January 1881 when

13 Hartwig, ‘Progress of White Settlement’, 275–76.
14 Dale, Bulldust and Bough Shades, 13.
Central Australia’s White population numbered only eighty-two. The report noted that the club’s first meeting was in 1878 and the racecourse was greatly improved by the addition of a grandstand. The annual races ‘were recognised as the event of the year by Central Australians, and looked forward to as the one great day of recreation in the year.’

Due to its isolation, Alice Springs race reports appeared intermittently in Adelaide newspapers or The Port Augusta Despatch. As the only regular sporting and social event in Central Australia during the colonial period, the report of the annual races was often the only Alice Springs news item each year. Occasional travellers also commented on the importance of the races to the White pastoralists and telegraph workers of Central Australia.

It is astonishing to find what a deal of interest is taken in horseracing in the centre of Australia. The few months I was occupied in laying down the country no less than three race meetings were held — one at the Charlotte, another at the Alice Springs, and a third at Tennant's Creek — and a fourth was to be held at Dalhousie about the time I reached Adelaide. Not a man is to be had at the time the races are on; neither love nor money will induce them to leave the ground before the meeting is over.

A drover, G H Lamond, wrote a detailed account of the races at Tennant Creek of around 1885 in his memoirs, confirming horseracing’s popularity. There was no settlement at Tennant Creek other than the telegraph station. Memories of the Barrow Creek killings were still fresh, resulting in the staff being ‘kept in rifles and ammunition to defend themselves in case of attacks by the blacks’. Lamond observed that ‘all the people from all around gathered for the race meeting every

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15 Nettlebeck and Foster, In The Name of the Law, 12.
16 Adelaide Observer, 29 January 1881.
18 Lamond, Tales of the Overland, 29.
year,\textsuperscript{19} coming from Alice Springs, Barrow Creek, Port Darwin, and Burketown in Queensland.\textsuperscript{20} The stockmen all had their own racehorses and were accompanied by ‘blackboy trackers’ who did the mustering. The race meeting gave Whites the rare opportunity to get some respite from the regular routine and isolation of station life.

We were a happy family and at night you could see the camp fires burning all round the race course in different places. One night a card party here, a song and dance somewhere else, and at daylight the horses at work, galloping or walking exercises, grooming, washing and getting feed for the horses, which the blacks generally did.\textsuperscript{21}

Although the races usually only spanned a few days, participants would often stay for weeks prior to the meeting. Race reports gave an insight into the progress of White society in Central Australia.

A more than usual interest was attached to this meeting [Alice Springs], as it was graced by the presence of the first lady that has penetrated into these uncivilized parts, one of the leading men in the district having recently bought his wife up to assist in rendering his stay in the interior less ‘unfriendly, melancholy, slow’.

Lamond’s account of the Tennant Creek races suggests that Black involvement was restricted to stock work. The Alice Springs race meeting described above was the first to report Black participation as part of ‘few minor events’ in the form of a ‘Blackfellows’ race and an Umbrella and Cigar race.\textsuperscript{23}

\textsuperscript{19} Ibid., 28.
\textsuperscript{20} Ibid., 28–29.
\textsuperscript{21} Ibid., 29.
\textsuperscript{22} Adelaide Observer, 20 February 1886.
\textsuperscript{23} The Port Augusta Despatch, 15 February 1886.
The Gulf

At the same time that the pastoral industry expanded northward into Central Australia from South Australia, there was similar expansion from Queensland westward into the Gulf region. The Gulf country became the main route to the Northern Territory from Queensland from 1872. Tony Roberts provided a detailed account of the frontier contact in the region which he described as ‘one of the most disturbing chapters in Territory history’. Similar to Central Australia, the Gulf country was the scene of extraordinary violence perpetrated in the pastoral expansion of the late nineteenth century.

White intrusion into the Gulf region differed from the central and northern regions of the Territory in that it was an extension of the Queensland pastoral frontier where conflict and violence had reached extreme levels. A former officer of the notorious Queensland Native Police, D’Arcy Wentworth Uhr, was one of the first to drive cattle through the Gulf country to the Northern Territory. He was described as ‘one of the hardest cases of all’, having been charged and acquitted twice by White juries of the murder of Blacks in Queensland. This was probably the ‘practical’ experience that pastoralist Dillon Cox was looking for in a drover to overland his stock to the Telegraph Line. The party set off on 25 May 1872 from Burketown, and arrived at the Roper River in August. Ernestine Hill claims that Uhr ‘shot his way through the blacks’ and Roberts provides ample evidence in the retracing of the journey. The ‘Queensland touch’ to frontier race relations was considered a necessity and was encouraged in The Times, which kept up a commentary on the

25 Markus, Australian Race Relations, 37.
26 Reid, A Picnic with the Natives, 57.
27 Roberts, Frontier Justice, 13.
28 Hill, The Territory, 166.
29 Roberts, Frontier Justice, 16–23.
30 Northern Territory Times, 25 March 1876.
frontier and advocated that perpetrators of Aboriginal ‘outrages’ against the Whites be dealt with severely. Editorials, police and pastoralists ignored the fact that Aborigines were British subjects and as such were entitled to the protection of British law.  

The frontier reality was that it was only Whites who warranted protection and those usurping the land were encouraged to:

save themselves the trouble of bringing in prisoners such a distance [to Palmerston] to serve no sensible purpose. The only thing hitherto proved of any value in bringing the niggers to their senses have been dogs and revolvers; and we trust the party will not be afraid to use them. The Queenslanders have been taken to task several times for their mode of dealing with them; but our eastern neighbours have dearly bought their experience and it would be unwise of us not to profit by it.  

Uhr, who had extensive experience of the ‘Queensland touch’ would go on to become one of the Territory’s ‘colourful racing identities’ and ‘sports’ in the Top End.  

He was one of many sportsmen whose reputation and status in White society was based upon frontier violence and/or strident racist attitudes against Blacks. Such men, often known killers amongst White frontier settlers, were prominent at almost every race meeting in the Territory between 1875 and 1918.  

Eulogising White frontier killers was accepted in White society although there was a reticence to openly acknowledge it.  

By denying the brutal reality, Aboriginal rights were ignored and ‘history’ was recast as a battle between brave stoic bushmen against savage Blacks justifying their dispossession.

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31 Nettlebeck and Foster, In the Name of the Law, 31.
32 Northern Territory Times, 17 July 1875.
33 Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sport and Leisure Database’. Uhr was involved in rifle shooting, boxing, horseracing, cricket and athletics 1881–1887. See also Lamond, Tales of the Overland, 75, and Richards, The Secret War, 265.
34 Appendix 4.
Race relations reached one of its lowest ebbs following the ‘Daly River Murders’ in 1884 which resulted in the deaths of four Whites. The reprisals that followed were again encouraged by The Times and set both the tone and agenda for further frontier expansion in the years that followed.

Backward the native must move before the tide of civilisation or, if they will not give place peaceably, and show their natures are as dangerous as the venomous serpent, even as every man will crush a snake under his heel, so must the hand of every man be raised against a tribe of inhuman monsters, whose cowardly and murderous nature renders them unfit to live.36

The editorial was probably written by V L Solomon, proprietor of The Times 1885 to 1890 and the Northern Territory’s first member of Parliament (South Australian 1890–1901).37 Solomon was one of Palmerston’s most influential citizens and was actively involved in sport as player, administrator and patron between 1876 and 1908.38

Borroloola

By the early 1880s, increasing traffic on the Gulf stock route led to the development of a settlement and deep water port at the mouth of the McArthur River. Initially, the main trade consisted of sly grog shops and supplying stores for the surrounding stations. In 1884, William McLeod arrived from Queensland to establish a store and hotel. Alfred Searcy, Government customs collector, provided a contemporary insight into McLeod and the new settlement.

36 Northern Territory Times, 6 March 1886.
37 See Carment et. al., Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography, Vol 1, 265–270.
38 Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sport and Leisure Data Base’.
McLeod was an old pioneer, both of the Territory and Queensland. In the latter state he was especially renowned for his experience with the niggers … the niggers [at McArthur] had made one raid on McLeod. ‘But’ he remarked, ‘they didn’t stop long. I had just time to fire six shots, and they said “good-day”’. 39

McLeod died pursuing a thief in May 1886. Searcy’s epitaph to him illustrates a great deal about the frontier and the men who inhabited it. ‘He [McLeod] was a man of real grit — the sort of grit shown by the men who have helped to build the Empire.’ 40

McArthur was renamed Borroloola when it was proclaimed on 4 September 1885. By the end of the year it had grown to a dozen dwellings, including two hotels. A contemporary account gives an impression of the men who lived in the Gulf country and the occasions when they came to town.

The bushmen and cattle-men present were of the usual type — garrulous, heavy bearded, and travel-stained … A pair of mole-skin trousers, and a shirt — worn outside the former — rolled up at the sleeves, was the prevailing fashion in dress. The inevitable revolver in its case on the belt completed the costume. When I entered, some were playing cards on the top of an old barrel, some were talking, and a select little party of drovers and bush-hands were playing pitch and toss with half crowns in another corner. 41

Borroloola developed a reputation for lawlessness. In January 1886, Walter Cuthbertson, a government surveyor working in the town, reported:

39 Searcy, In Australian Tropics, 123.
40 Ibid., 124.
41 J Mackie, They That Sit In Darkness (London: Hutchinson, 1897), quoted in Roberts, Frontier Justice, 73.
The residents also bitterly complain of the government giving them no police protection, for these districts are at present the resort of all the scum of Northern Australia, who dare not go to Queensland and dare not go to the Telegraph line, but find the Macarthur a very suitable place to squat.\footnote{Roberts, \textit{Frontier Justice}, 75}

The complaints mounted and in response constables Michael Donegan and William Curtis were transferred to Borroloola and Gilbert McMinn took up the position of customs officer and magistrate. Soon after his arrival, McMinn reported that there was no sign of the lawlessness that he had been warned about. By the end of the year, the \textit{South Australian Register} reported that ‘with the exodus of the rowdies and the advent of the authorities the scene has changed, and the once lively Macarthur township has become the dead-and-alive prosaic Borroloola of today.’\footnote{\textit{South Australian Register}, 29 November 1886.} Optimism grew and in August 1886, the Borroloola and Tableland Progress Association was formed, followed by the McArthur River Jockey Club in September 1886.\footnote{Roberts, \textit{Frontier Justice}, 79.} The club played an important symbolic role in giving the wild frontier outpost a civilised veneer.

The newly arrived Constables Donegan and Curtis were reported in the \textit{North Australian} to have been in the thick of the action at Borroloola’s first race meeting.
From the Macarthur River we learn that the residents there had some good horse racing at Christmas and New Year time. Mr Donegan appears to have ‘scooped the pool’ with Ruination. … After his horse had put all the others through in the ordinary way, a special racer was sent for to turn the tables on him, and a match race for £50 a side was made, which resulted in the genial Donegan becoming a winner once more … the Sergeant [Donegan], who, according to the report, fleeced the multitude, at times laying odds of 20 to 1 on his misnamed steed. His brother officer, Constable Curtis, was quite unlucky as Mr. Donegan was fortunate; for he not only failed to win anything, but at one meeting he borrowed and started a Chinaman’s horse, and the animal fell during the race and was killed instantly. A blackboy was riding the horse, but he escaped unhurt.45

Inspector Foelsche demanded an explanation of his officers’ involvement in the races following the report. Curtis and Donegan denied gambling or improper behaviour. Donegan’s impassioned letter also indicates how important the races were to White frontier settlements in filling the ‘empty spaces’ felt so keenly in the lives of many White settlers so far from ‘civilisation’.46

… I have a natural love for horses & race more for sport than gain. I do not gamble or let racing in any way interfere with my duties as a Police officer. A horse race is the only source of amusement we have in a place where we live in a Chronic state of Fever & Ague & suffer occasionally from famine.47

Records of the McArthur River Jockey Club are incomplete but annual race meetings were held until the mid 1890s. The club was so keen to establish its social credentials

45 The North Australian, 9 April 1887.
46 McKenna, Looking For Blackfellas’ Point, 104.
47 MC Donegan to Inspector Foelsche, 17 June 1887, F275, NTAS, Darwin.
that the Government Resident, Langdon Parsons, was invited to attend its 1887 meeting.\textsuperscript{48} Although the annual races were by far the most important social occasion of the year in Borroloola and other frontier communities, occasionally other sports were held. In 1891, Boxing Day sports were held in Borroloola that included athletics and a rifle match. Events were concluded with

several events for the niggers. The greasy pole was great fun; the prize was won by an alligator, and he deserved it. We also got them to throw spears, the distance being about 35 yards. This was a most wretched performance, and it is remarkable that the best shot was Rum Jungle boy (Tommy) in the police.\textsuperscript{49}

It was common police practice during this period to bring Blacks from distant areas to work as police trackers. Mounted Constable Donegan argued in 1888 that ‘to successfully cope with the savage Blacks of this district & I may say savage and lawless whites it will be necessary to immediately station here another Constable and a force of trackers.’\textsuperscript{50} The continuing theme over a number of years indicates just how brutal the frontier was.

\textsuperscript{48} Oliver Wates, ‘Invitation to the Macarthur River Jockey Club Rescheduled Annual Races,’ 1 March 1887, GRIC, A10000, NTAS, Darwin.

\textsuperscript{49} Northern Territory Times, 23 January 1891.

\textsuperscript{50} MC Donegan to Inspector Foelsche, May 22nd 1888, F275, NTAS, Darwin. It should be noted that Constable Power was held in high regard by the infamous Mounted Constable William Willshire, who described Power as a ‘good and fearless man’ in his own book, The Land of the Dawning (Adelaide: W K Thomas, 1896), 73.
… the police here are placed at a great disadvantage through not having a tracker who does not belong to the district … The tracker I have at present belongs to a neighbouring tribe … He would suit us very well if the blacks were not treacherous, but as they are extremely so … I feel sure I need not remind you that blacks can come on to attack any person without being seen until quite close or perhaps its too late … The Tableland blacks are not much to be feared as their country is more easy in their pursuit and capture.51

Tommy’s involvement at the 1891 sports confirms that the lobbying was successful. Sport was a rare diversion. Little is known of the lives of Black police but far from their own country and working with Mounted Police, their role was a brutal and dehumanising one. Bill Wilson described the period 1884 to 1898 on the Northern Territory frontier as one of institutionalised violence. The police, and in particular the native police, often acted ‘outside the law’ and ‘wantonly killed other Aboriginal people’, under a bankrupt policy [that] led to native police engaging in outright warfare to secure peace on the frontier, a peace bought with death and violence.52

‘Coming in’

In such an environment, ‘coming in’ to the relative security of the few small settlements such as Alice Springs or Borroloola or cattle stations was inevitable for most Aborigines. ‘Coming in’ was an important part of the process of adaption, accommodation, resistance and negotiation and essential in understanding the character of frontier society. It was often used to describe the period when Black lives changed from being ‘wild’ or ‘myall’, living a traditional lifestyle in the bush, to one where they became ‘tame’ or ‘quietened down’, living largely on cattle stations or on the fringes of White settlements. It is a dynamic concept reflecting the complexities of the ‘contact zone’. Conflict cannot be sustained indefinitely in the

51 Ibid.
52 Wilson, ‘A Force Apart?’, 328.
face of declining natural resources and the overwhelming superiority of White weaponry and infrastructure.

There were no peace treaties, no formal negotiations. The only event which marked the termination of hostilities was when the blacks 'came in' to pastoral stations or fringe camps. With that development a whole new range of problems arose for both the Aborigines and settlers as they learned to live in proximity and the blacks were taught to conform to the demands of the conquerors.53

‘Coming in’ was not a single event nor even a transition period. Clendinnen observed that “coming in” which at our distance can look like a psychic collapse’, did not tell the full story.54 It was a multi-faceted response to the complex circumstances that confronted Aborigines but it ‘never meant total acceptance or submission to Australian colonial culture’ and nor did it mean a rejection of their bush lifestyle.55 Two of the most powerful reasons for ‘coming in’ were security and access to resources. While the security of cattle stations was highly problematic and relative, it did decrease the probability of death through violence. In return, Aborigines entered a life of grinding poverty and oppression under the constant threat of violence although it did provide the possibility of access to valuable resources and goods. McGrath likened frontier cattle stations to ‘superwaterholes’ with a seemingly endless abundance of food and goods.56 The pastoralists needed a subservient workforce and to achieve it provided ‘protection’ of Blacks who sought refuge from the overt and unpredictable violence of the frontier, which also enabled them to stay in close proximity to their lands.57 The relationships between the pastoralists and their Black workforce in the early twentieth century were always tense and the threat of violence was ever-present. Although Black and White stockmen worked side by

53 Reynolds, Frontier, 63.
54 Clendinnen, True Stories, 47.
55 McGrath, Born in the Cattle, 20.
56 Ibid., 20.
57 Ibid., 99.
side, it was often an uneasy relationship based on mistrust and fear and it was seen as necessary to maintain social distance.

We [White stockmen] never made mates of them [Blacks] — we never spoke to them — and I would never speak to them like I'm talking to you — only tell them what to do — but anyone who made mates of them never did any good with them … You wouldn't allow them to mix with the whites or whites to mix with them.  

The ‘unwritten’ code of the White stockmen was to keep Black stockmen ‘in their place’. Inclusion into sport events was a reflection of frontier power and race relations marking a modicum of White acceptance. It indicated that a Black had attained the necessary rights and/or status of such a privilege without threatening their authority and control. Sport participation was always conditional upon White sanction.

The role of the race club in organising the annual races in this environment was important in demonstrating the semblance of ‘civilised’ society. A glimpse of the role that the Jockey Club played in the small isolated community is found in minutes of the McArthur River Jockey Club from June 1893 to June 1894. The elected committee held thirteen meetings in the course of the year to organise the annual races. The club, similar to those in the Top End, was a means of establishing and maintaining status in the community and excluding others. The minutes reveal that in such a small isolated town the committee’s machinations gave the community a good deal to talk about. Nineteen men attended the Annual General Meeting, the majority of the White male population, and a committee of twelve was appointed.  

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58 Ivor Hall, Oral history interview by Jean Trafford, NTRS 226 TS 60/1, NTAS, Darwin, 1981, 17.
addition, Mounted Constable Power was co-opted as secretary. Power wrote to Inspector Foelsche seeking permission to take up the position.

Sir, I have the honour respectfully to request your permission to accept an office from the Borroloola Racing Club. The races annually held here are purely local and more like Picnic Races than anything else. There are so few residents that the filling of offices is somewhat difficult and as the annual races are the only recreation available I trust the Inspector will not refuse his permission to allow me to accept an office.  

Meetings were held alternately at the two hotels in the town to spread the business equally between the two licensees, Matthew Hart and George Martin, both committee members. The committee elected and appointed all the race day officials while also determining the acceptance or rejection of their own nominations for the races. The three day race meeting with stakes and prizes to the value of £326 was

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60 MC C Power to Inspector Foelsche, April 14th 1893, F275, NTAS, Darwin.
held in mid July and was considered a ‘great success.’ The last reported meeting of
the McArthur River Jockey Club was in 1895.

**Alice Springs**

By the mid-1890s, Black resistance in Central Australia had become spasmodic. An
uneasy accommodation developed that resulted in Blacks becoming increasingly
dependent on Whites for rations. Throughout this period, the MacDonnell Range
Turf Club continued to play a central role in the Central Australian White
community. Although there was an attempt to establish cricket in the small
township in 1890, horseracing remained the only sport to capture the imagination of
the small White population. News from Central Australia revolved around three
main themes: weather, mining and the annual races. ‘The Alice has been very lively
during the last month, the “Sports” rolling up from all parts to take part in the race
meeting on Xmas which promises to be a great success.’ The correspondence of F J
Gillen and Ernest Cowle to Baldwin Spencer 1894 to 1898 gives an insight into the
social importance of the annual races. Cowle and Gillen were anthropological
collectors and collaborators with Spencer. Their letters, like contemporary newspaper
reports, made it clear that many people eagerly looked forward to the races.
‘Everyone here highly excited over the forthcoming races and busy with their
horses.’ Blacks came to consider Christmas a time of plenty and also gathered in

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61 Northern Territory Times, 31 August 1894.
62 Ibid., 2 August 1895.
63 Peter Donovan, Alice Springs: Its History and the People Who Made It (Alice Springs: Alice
Springs Town Council, 1988), 89.
64 The Port Augusta and Quorn Dispatch, 2 September 1892, reported the Macdonnell Range Turf
Club and the Stuart Racing club. By 1893, these had merged to become the Macdonnell Range and
Stuart Turf Club.
65 Ibid., 12 September 1890. A meeting was held indicating that cricket practice would commence
immediately but there is no evidence that games were played.
66 Ibid., 25 December 1891.
67 John Mulvaney, Howard Morphy, and Alison Petch, eds., From the Frontier: Outback Letters to
Baldwin Spencer (Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 2000), 56. Cowle to Spencer, 14 November 1894
town.  Doris Blackwell, who lived at the Alice Springs Telegraph Station at the beginning of the twentieth century, observed that ‘men whose treatment of the natives otherwise bordered on the barbaric seemed unable to resist the Christmas message and extended generous hands filled with food.’ Although the rations on offer, rather than the races themselves, were probably the main attraction, there is evidence that Blacks recognised the races had some celebratory significance to the Whites, describing them as ‘Nanto corroboree.’ ‘Nanto’ means horse.

Plate 20: Horse race spectators at the Grand Stand, Alice Springs, c1898. (F J, Gillen, SL SA, B 10362)

Despite its isolation, sporting activities in Alice Springs linked the community to the British Empire. In May 1900, the Alice Springs Patriotic Races were held to celebrate events of the Boer War. Although Alice Springs remained a focal point, the largest White population had shifted to the Arltunga Goldfields. Arltunga was not a township as such but a scattering of mines, stores, pubs and dwellings over one hundred square kilometres. In 1903, a ‘rush’ to Winnecke increased the population to

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68 McGrath, Born in the Cattle, 105.
70 The Port Augusta and Quorn Dispatch, 4 January 1895.
71 The Adelaide Observer, 7 July 1900.
over 400.\textsuperscript{72} As a consequence, Arltunga became the focus for sport. In 1903, the Northern Territory’s first games of Australian football were played on Sundays at the Loves Creek goldfield.\textsuperscript{73} As was the case in the Top End, developments in the mining industry were often mirrored by the formation of horseracing clubs and the Arltunga Race Club held meetings in 1905\textsuperscript{74} and 1906.\textsuperscript{75}

Although cricket and Australian football had made fleeting appearances in Central Australia, tennis was the first sport, other than horseracing, to make a permanent mark. The first court was built at the Overland Telegraph station in approximately 1906 but it was considered somewhat anti-social to be so far from the township and so another dirt court was established alongside the Stuart Arms Hotel. Blackwell recalls that ‘dust and all, we enjoyed playing there’ and matches were often watched by Black children.\textsuperscript{76}

\textsuperscript{73} William Coulthard, ‘Diary of William Coulthard: Transcribed and Annotated by Kate Holmes,’ Northern Territory Library, Darwin, 1903, Letter to Harriet, Loves Creek, July 5th, 1903.
\textsuperscript{74} The Adelaide Observer, 13 January 1906.
\textsuperscript{75} Ibid., 12 & 26 January 1907.
\textsuperscript{76} Blackwell and Lockwood, Alice on the Line, 147.
Plate 21: Alice Springs’ first tennis court. Left to right, Doris Bradshaw, Miss Mabel Taylor, Mr Bill Perry, unknown, unknown, Ernest Allchurch and Charlie Lamshed. June 1906. (Unknown, Smith Collection, NTL, PH0763/0037)

The Victoria River District (VRD)

If the Northern Territory was the last Australian frontier and inherited the legacy of frontier conflict and violence from the other Australian colonies, then the VRD was the last frontier in the Northern Territory. The district was the last major pastoral province to be settled during the boom of the 1880s. Delamere was the first station established in 1881. Victoria River Downs and Wave Hill stations were stocked in 1883 and gradually more were established throughout the decade. Evil is an emotive term and attributing motive equally fraught, but the evidence is compelling that the frontier violence in the VRD during this period was extremely brutal, at times organised and tacitly endorsed by White settler society. Many of those who came to the VRD were ‘practical bushmen’ with Queensland experience. They would rarely travel without weapons. Their strategy to occupy the land was initially ‘to kill, and after a period of ruthless extermination, the second tactic was to incorporate the survivors into the station workforce’. 77 Although a conspiratorial silence combined with the use of euphemisms surrounded the activities of ‘practical bushmen’, some

77 Rose, Hidden Histories, 20.
stories have been revealed that provide an insight into the nature and time span of the violence. T W Lavender, a young stockman on Victoria River Downs station in 1914, was taken into the confidence of experienced stockmen.

Drastic practice in urgent cases was to induce the offending nigger to accompany a party of whites to a suitable place well out on the run where he was clandestinely ‘accidently’ shot dead. The whites of course never ‘talked’ officially of these matters. The blacks eventually knew all about it, would probably find remains in due course, or the scorched evidence of a big fire (definitely no ashes as civilisation and the police caught up with the years) and guess the rest.  

Police Constable William Henry Willshire was probably the most notorious police officer to work in the VRD. Although he was stationed there for just over a year, his reputation as ‘one of Australia’s most callous butchers of humanity’ preceded him. 

Stationed at Gordon Creek, near Wave Hill, from May 1894 to November 1895, Willshire believed ‘a good Winchester or Martini carbine, in conjunction with a colt revolver … are your best friends, and you must use them too’. In one of the more infamous episodes of violence, teamsters Ligar and Mulligan were attacked in Jasper Gorge in May 1895. The reprisals that followed are described graphically in Peter

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79 Mulvaney, Encounters in Place, 124.
80 Ibid., 127.
81 Ligar was a sportsman. ‘When I was just old enough to notice things at Springvale there was a well built stock boy by the name of Mahdi from Katherine Police on walk-a-bout. He was playing cricket in front of the Store room and there was a notorious white man named George Ligar from Katherine who was showing them how to bowl and bat. George Ligar no doubt could play cricket for he had a college education had done 3 or 4 years Law course at a university but ran away from his home and threw in his studies preferring a free life and came to the Territory and first joined the Police Force under Paul Foelsche but left that and went bush. However, he used to bowl the blacks out and get the bat and while the blacks were scrambling or looking for the ball and screaming with laughter. George had Mahdi's navy coat on making runs.’ Harold and Doris Giles, ‘Personal Papers, Memoirs and Diaries of Giles Family Relating to Elsey, Springvale and Bonrook Stations, ca 1890 –1981’, NTRS 298, NTAS, Darwin, 16.
and Jay Reads’, Long Time Olden Time. Blacks in the area were hunted down, rounded up, chained, and shot with the remains burnt at the Gordon Creek Police Station where Willshire had been stationed.\(^{82}\) Although the police constable is not identified in the oral testimonies, it was likely to have been Mounted Constable Edmond O’Keefe who was based at Timber Creek until April 1905.\(^{83}\) What is clear is that the police provided little protection, let alone justice on the frontier.

Extreme frontier violence perpetrated against Aborigines during this period was not confined to the VRD. The Roper Region lies at the northern limits of the Gulf country and was the scene of terrible violence during the period 1890 to 1910. In 1897, the Management of Elsey Station was taken over by John McLennan whose tenure as manager was one of almost constant war with the Aborigines and is well documented in Francesca Merlan’s ‘Making People Quiet’.\(^{84}\) ‘Making People Quiet’ was an Aboriginal phrase used to describe the methods to ‘pacify’ the Roper Region. McLennan employed Black against Black to create an environment where no-one was safe. McLennan’s reign of terror on Elsey Station overlapped with that of Aeneas Gunn who assumed the role in 1902. McLennan was the ‘Sanguine Scot’ in Jeannie Gunn’s We of the Never-Never, based on her year at Elsey. The insidiousness of the frontier violence is perhaps best illustrated, with a tragic irony, in We of the Never-Never. Even this nostalgic and romantic account of frontier life includes Gunn’s account of her involvement in a ‘nigger hunt’ that she claimed ‘would only involve the captured with general discomfiture’.\(^{85}\) Gunn’s ‘nigger hunt’ preceded the infamous Eastern and African Cold Storage Company which took up 19,250 square miles of land in 1903 in the Roper River Region encompassing Elsey, Hodgson Downs and Wollogorang stations. ‘It was probably one of the few authenticated instances in which the aborigines were systematically hunted. For a time the

\(^{82}\) Read, Long Time Olden Time, 60.
\(^{83}\) Ibid., 57.
\(^{84}\) Francesca Merlan, “‘Making People Quiet’ in the Pastoral North: Reminiscences of Elsey Station”, Aboriginal History 2, no. 1 (1978): 70–106.
company employed 2 gangs of 10 to 14 blacks headed by a white man or a half caste to hunt and shoot the wild blacks on sight.\textsuperscript{86} This ‘racial contempt’ to equate killing to sport by using hunting analogies occurred in Africa as well as Australia.\textsuperscript{87} The use of such language to describe frontier violence was to obfuscate, diminish and deny the reality. Rose argues convincingly that

death and denial constituted two critical moments in the colonisation of the north. Of the two, denial persists in a particularly pungent form, and through its practice engenders complicity with all that has gone before … the past is concealed; and the living become accomplices in the continuation of injustice.\textsuperscript{88}

Horseracing was a part of the frontier denial by giving life the semblance of normality, which contradicted the reality.

It was during this period of poisonous race relations around the turn of the century that the first race meeting in the VRD was held at Wave Hill at Christmas 1895.\textsuperscript{89} Christmas was one of the few holidays on many stations, although it was not universally observed. No details of the race meeting were given but it is reasonable to assume that most of the Whites who worked on the Wave Hill and adjoining stations attended. It is also likely that they were directly involved or complicit in the tide of violence that had engulfed the region. It is unlikely many Blacks would have attended. This is confirmed by Lindsay Crawford, Victoria River Downs station manager who, in 1895 wrote:

\textsuperscript{86} Bauer, Historical Geography, 157.  
\textsuperscript{87} Hoberman, Darwin’s Athletes, 113.  
\textsuperscript{88} Rose, Hidden Histories, 259.  
\textsuperscript{89} Darrell Lewis, A Brief History of Racing in the Victoria River District (Darwin: The Author, 1996), 1.
during the last ten years, in fact since the first white man settled here, we have held no communication with the natives at all, except with the rifle. They have never been allowed near this station or the outstations, being too treacherous and warlike.90

Horseracing was the only documented public sporting event in the VRD during the colonial period.91 Lewis documents horse races in the district in 1901–1904, 1906, 1908 and 1909. There are no further races recorded until 1920.92 This corresponds with the period 1904 to 1919, which Rose describes as ‘a reign of terror within a hierarchical system that pitted Aborigine against Aborigine in the scramble for position.’93 White station owners and workers in collaboration with local government officials and police were all part of a hierarchy that kept Blacks in their place and ‘the last ounce of flesh was extracted from people who had very few options in defending themselves. This exercise of power was inscribed on the bodies and in the minds and hearts of many Aboriginal people.’94

In November 1904, one of the owners at the VRD races was Charlie Sweeney.95 Sweeney, a Queensland Aborigine, was described by Rose as ‘having a lust for blood which was, not unreasonably, matched by an intense fear of local bush people.’96 Big Mick Kankinang, an informant for Hidden Histories, provides a sketch of Sweeney’s role while working for Townsend, the VRD manager, 1904–1919.

91 In one of the most curious sporting references found in the course of this research, Australian football may have been played in the camp of Willshire while stationed at Gordon Creek. ‘There are now fourteen Children here, either eating or playing football all day long.’ Land of the Dawning, 1896, 73. Willshire was from South Australia so it is assumed to be Australian football.
93 Rose, Hidden Histories, 169.
94 Ibid., 169.
95 Northern Territory Times, 30 December 1904.
96 Rose, Hidden Histories, 51.
Mick: That Townsend was here and he shot all the people then. He had Charlie; Townsend had a half-caste Charlie Sweeney. And two fellow [those two] shot all the people from that side right this way, right up Wardaman mob.

Debbie: That’d be Karangpurru right up?

Mick: Yeah … that twofellow got up there: ‘Here’s the fucking blackfellow, like dogs. I’ll, I’ll, I’ll get him.’ Run and kill him like a bloody dog.97

Rose pointed out that the life of ‘black boys’ from distant regions was unenviable and that one of the ‘few perks’, as a form of compensation, that was available to them was access to women.98 It is clear from the reports of the 1904 and 1905 Victoria River races that for Sweeney acceptance into the Victoria River racing fraternity as an owner was also a rare form of compensation. It suggests social acceptance into the ‘inner circle’ of Victoria River White society. As an indication of just how rare this was, records indicate that only two Aboriginal owners participated in Northern Territory horseracing between 1874 and 1918.99 Big Mick Kankinang’s testimony confirms that Sweeney’s status was gained through his proficiency with a rifle. This is further acknowledged by his participation in a shooting competition following the 1904 races.

97 Ibid.
98 Ibid.
99 Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sport and Leisure Database.’ Paddy White, another Queensland Aboriginal, was granted owner status at the races run by the Chinese at Brock’s Creek in 1899.
The members of the club put in their spare time shooting at Dawson and Burke’s bottles, but these were proved to be too large a mark so pen handles were taken on. Lea and Perins was also knocked about. Honours were taken by O’Keefe [constable] and Sweeney.\textsuperscript{100}

Sweeney was again an owner at the 1905 VRD races. T P Kelly, who attended the meeting in his capacity as honorary secretary, described the crowd and the nature of the social hierarchy on the frontier.

There was a big crowd present for the thinly settled Victoria River District, viz. eighteen white men, some of whom had shown their enthusiasm by riding over one hundred miles to be present at the meeting. Besides these there was a large gathering of blackboys and nondescrpts.\textsuperscript{101}

It must be remembered that the VRD races continued at a time described as ‘desperate, chaotic and [a] violent free-for-all.’\textsuperscript{102} Rose’s account of the period between 1904 and 1911 indicates that it was one of the most violent of the colonial era. It has been demonstrated that the Victoria River Downs station manager Townsend employed ‘outside’ Blacks as paid killers. Stations were also afflicted by conflicts over women and between bush and station Blacks. There were also stories of poisonings. For Aborigines the overall picture of VRD station life was one of brutality and fear.\textsuperscript{103}

Until the early twentieth century, the Northern Territory frontier was a very dangerous place. Collusion between police, government officials and pastoralists driven by a desire for land, water and wealth, underpinned by racial contempt,
ensured there were few constraints to White settlement that viewed Black resistance as inimical to White progress. The expanding frontier was engulfed in a war for vital, but scarce resources, where the only prospect of ‘security’ for Aborigines lay in ‘coming in’, to surrender to the threat of violence on the cattle stations or to live on the margins of telegraph stations, or the small settlements of Borroloola or Alice Springs. Contrary to the nostalgic popular view of ‘up country’ or bush racing meetings being festive occasions, the evidence suggests a more complex reality. They represented a trophy moment for the White settlers celebrating their triumph on the colonial frontier. Horserace meetings may have provided a sense of social occasion and connection for White males and some select ‘blackboys’ in their employ, but for the majority of Aborigines they brought together many of the most violent men in the region, an event best avoided. The violence and attitudes of the frontier were not confined to the outback but permeated Palmerston society. ‘Practical bushmen’ were lauded in Palmerston as true ‘pioneers’ who were welcomed at social and sporting events. Their presence, whether in person or imagined, was an important psychological buffer between the ‘civilised’ society of town and the frontier where ‘wild Blacks’ remained a danger. While the Black threat on the frontier remained, it provided a rationale to maintain racial intolerance and segregation in Palmerston and other settlements.

Plate 22: Race meeting [Pine Creek, c1910]. (William Charles Miller, David R. Miller Collection, NTL, PH0188/0122
Chapter 5: Transition to the Commonwealth: Willie Allen, the Northern Territory’s First Aboriginal Sports Champion, 1900–1911

Willy [sic] Allen has proved himself the best all round player in the club by annexing no less than three out of six possible prizes. He is a good field, a safe bat, and at times has shown himself to be a tip-topper with the ball.

Federation

Federation and the establishment of the Commonwealth Government on 1 January 1901 were heralded by The Times as ‘the greatest event in the history of the Northern Territory’. Few noted, or were aware, that Australia’s Aborigines had been disenfranchised and were excluded from the census. Issues of greater significance that captured the public imagination were the ‘White Australia’ policy and the Boer War. The event was marked in rather desultory fashion in Palmerston with a children’s sports day and, somewhat ironically, a ‘brilliant’ display of fireworks organised by Darwin’s Japanese community.

The economy remained in the grip of the 1890s depression and, with the exception of a revived pastoral industry, had stagnated. The South Australian government used federation as an opportunity to relinquish the debt-ridden Territory to the Commonwealth. During the transition, the South Australian government developed its first significant legislation to address the ‘Aboriginal problem’ in the form of The

1 Northern Territory Times, 20 November 1911.
2 Northern Territory Times, 4 January 1901.
3 Stuart Macintyre, A Concise History of Australia (Melbourne: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 114.
4 Northern Territory Times, 4 January 1901. See also Lesley Mearns & Leith Barter, eds. Progressing Backwards: The Northern Territory in 1901 (Darwin: Historical Society of the Northern Territory, 2002).
5 Donovan, A Land Full of Possibilities, 189.
Northern Territory Aborigines Act 1910, which was immediately handed over to the Commonwealth on the transfer in 1911. It was amended to become the Aboriginals Ordinance 1911. These laws emphasised the shift from ‘protection’ to control.

During this period, sport participation mirrored the moribund economy and the falling population. All sports struggled for participants with the exception of rifle shooting, and declined to the lowest levels seen since the 1870s.6 Sporting clubs which had provided stability to Palmerston sport since the 1880s — the Port Darwin Cricket Club and the Northern Territory Racing Club — showed signs of waning. Despite declining participation and public interest, sport remained firmly in White control. Blacks, Chinese and ‘others’ remained segregated and restricted to ‘blackfellow races’ or ‘Chinaman events’. Although segregation remained the norm for Palmerston sports, there were rare exceptions. Amid a growing concern, bordering on paranoia, of the ‘half-caste problem’, some managed to participate in White sports. While these may be isolated exceptions, they were indicators of change.

North Australia’s social terrain was well entrenched and defined primarily by race, then class and gender.7 Willie Allen was one of the first Territory Aborigines to use sport as a vehicle to subvert and test the deeply ingrained racial stereotypes and social barriers. This was at a time when Aborigines were routinely referred to as ‘niggers’ and considered by many as ‘the lowest race in the scale of barbarian races, as well as the lowest in human intelligence,’8 whose path to extinction could only be made as pleasant as possible.9 White trepidation and disdain also extended to the increasing Coloured population who were ‘fast becoming a menace to law and

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6 See Figure 2, 101.
7 Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 246.
8 Select Committee on the Aborigines Bill, Minutes of Evidence and Appendices, SAPP 77/1899, Adelaide, 1899, 100. Submission to the committee made by F J Gillen, Sub-Protector of Aborigines in Central Australia, 1892–1899.
9 Ibid., 96.
order’. 10 This threat was as much a moral hazard as a legal one because it exposed a discomforting reality that White men were breaking taboos by consorting with Black women and the resultant progeny tainted the moral character and respectability of the whole White community. In such a social environment it was extraordinary that Willie Allen became the Northern Territory’s first Aboriginal sports champion and in doing so built upon the possibility of change to rigid White control of sport, suggested by the experiences of Murray, Bismark and the Brocks Creek Chinese races during the 1890s. His experience, was a clear reflection of Broome’s contention that

Aborigines were trapped by the pervasive racial caste barrier which was accompanied by a syndrome of derogatory stereotypes about Aborigines … The only way in which Aboriginal men could hope to cross the caste barrier was, they and others believed, through sport. 11

Hidden Histories

Allen’s remarkable story has parallels with Britain’s Arthur Wharton. Both stories are synonymous with sporting firsts, yet their contributions have been omitted from history. Phil Vasili wrote in The First Black Footballer of his efforts to reclaim Wharton’s history that ‘Arthur is now visible to those who want to find him. The dust was again kicked up from below.’ 12 Allen’s story was buried much deeper in the record and memory than Wharton’s. Its discovery required much more than the removal of dust, but rather layers of contradictions, anomalies and ambiguities to reveal a tantalising glimpse into a hitherto hidden history that suggests that Allen’s may not be an isolated story.

12 Vasili, The First Black Footballer, 201.
Allen’s story has been buried since 1919, the time he left the Northern Territory never to return. Due to the complete ‘silence’ from the man himself, and the fragmentary nature of the available evidence, much had to be assumed. The initial survey of newspapers that provides the underlying evidence for this research gave no clue to the identity of the ‘W Allen’ who became prominent in Palmerston between 1906 and 1911. Reports indicate that from 1898 to 1911, Allen competed in athletics, cricket, horseracing and rifle shooting and important one-off events such as his selection in Darwin’s first British Association football game in 1911. In the reports that do identify Allen, only one, in 1911, indicates his Aboriginality, when he won a ‘blackboys’ race. The re-examination of Allen’s story was only possible when members of Allen’s family, still resident in Darwin and Cairns, were able to provide invaluable clues and corroborating evidence that filled gaps in his story. The results of this collaboration must be considered incomplete and in need of further examination, but they do support the contention that sport in the Northern Territory until Allen’s experience had been a White man’s imperial experience and that the only way to enter this world was to conform to the image.

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13 Bruce Rigsby, Emeritus Professor of Anthropology, University of Queensland, email to author, 21 August, 2007. Allen appears to have returned to Darwin for approximately six months to attend to family business.

14 Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sport and Leisure Data Base,’ In the period 1898–1917 which encompasses Allen’s sporting career in Darwin there are 57 newspaper entries that may relate to Willie Allen. A check of electoral rolls, and other sources, indicates that is highly unlikely, although not impossible, that there are other Allens in Palmerston/Darwin during this period.

15 Northern Territory Times, 5 January 1912.

16 Ibid., 13 October 1911.

17 Important informants for this research were Cliff Little of Cairns, grandson of Willie Allen, and Alfie May of Darwin, grandson/nephew [according to Aboriginal Kinship] of Willie Allen.
Born in 1886, Allen’s mother Nellie was a Larrakia woman, and his White father was either Doctor Morris or Mr. Shepherd. Illustrating the ‘furtive but obsessive interest’ British colonial governments took in tracing miscegenation, a survey was undertaken by the Northern Territory police in 1899 to identify ‘half-castes’ in the Top End. It reveals that a thirteen-year-old Allen was employed in the household of Charles Edward Herbert, a Darwin barrister, who became Government Resident from 1905 to 1910. It was Allen’s relationship with the Herbert family that opened Darwin’s normally exclusive sporting society. It is apparent from reports of Allen’s

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19 George Thompson, ‘List of Half Castes in the Northern Territory,’ 12 December 1899, GRIC, 10441, NTAS, Darwin.
20 Robert Young, Colonial Desire, 174.
21 Ibid.
first foray into Palmerston sport that he must have entered the Herbert household prior to 1899 and struck up a friendship with Herbert’s sons, Lloyd and Oscar. The allegiance with the Herbert family may have been cemented when in June 1898 Charles Herbert was stabbed during an attempted robbery of his home by a Chinese intruder but ‘Mr Herbert had mastered his opponent and with the assistance of his blackboy, had bound him securely’.22 There is no way to ascertain if the ‘blackboy’ in this incident was Allen but he was definitely a member of the household by November. If it were Allen, it does help to explain why there was such a strong bond with the Herbert family which was maintained until his departure from the Northern Territory. Later that year, Allen played in Palmerston’s first inter-school cricket game between the private and public school teams.23 Although not selected in the original team, Allen excelled in the two games played.24 Allen also competed in athletics,25 and another series of schoolboy cricket games in 1900.26

At the time when Allen was starting his sporting career, Northern Territory Aboriginal issues had finally pricked the indifference of the South Australian Parliament and impelled them to action. Mr Justice Charles Dashwood, Government Resident from 1892 to 1905, instigated the introduction of an Aborigines Bill in the South Australian Parliament in 1899. It was the first major legislation drafted by the South Australian Parliament on the welfare of Aborigines.

22 Northern Territory Times, 10 June 1898. Herbert recovered from the wound quickly.
23 Ibid., 11 November 1898. There is no evidence to confirm if Allen attended school with Oscar and Lloyd Herbert or just played in the cricket team.
24 Ibid., 4, 11 & 15 November 1898.
25 Ibid., 1 June 1900.
26 Ibid., 21 September, 19 October 1900.
Although there may have been some concern for Aboriginal welfare in the government, this did not extend to Palmerston’s White society where the influence of strident frontier attitudes was unmistakable. William Jefferson was a member of the BAT staff between 1904 and 1906 and a keen sportsman. His correspondence to his family is representative of the attitudes of the time. ‘The blacks here are a cringing lot of creatures wherever whites are concerned. If ever we want anything done, we order the first black we see and there is never any trouble about.’

Palmerston remained removed, but not unaware, of the worst excesses of frontier violence. Again, Jefferson’s letters are revealing.

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27 William H Jefferson, 24 October 1904. ‘Correspondence to His Mother and Father’, August 1904 to May 1906, ML, Sydney, 1904.
A party of men are going out (without police) and it is not likely that they will make any arrests. The law of the bush up here is pretty short and sharp. A dozen white men have been killed up here in the last year, and the bushmen are getting very tired of it. Hanging is no punishment for the blacks. They have no fear of such a death.  

Jefferson and Palmerston’s White community preferred to ignore happenings beyond the town’s borders in order to maintain the façade of British law and justice.

**White Australia in the Tropical North**

In 1900, many people saw the creation of a Commonwealth government as a means to achieve a White Australia which for many was more important than federation itself. White dominance and Imperial security were important themes in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899–1902 often reflected in sports, particularly rifle clubs. The racial paranoia of Palmerston’s White rifle-shooting community has been noted previously. Despite the fact that the Boer war was between White protagonists and the Territory would have pitted Whites with guns against Blacks with spears, it did not prevent jingoistic posturing. It was suggested that at such a dangerous time the rifle club had more than just a sporting purpose and that it should be placed on a ‘firmer footing’, resulting in agitation to form a new defence rifle club.

In a place like Port Darwin, with its overwhelming coloured population as compared to the whites, and the possibility — remote, perhaps, but still a possibility — of a crisis some day arising when such a trained force would be of incalculable service.  

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28 Ibid. 7 January 1906.  
29 Reynolds, North of Capricorn, 160.  
30 Northern Territory Times, 27 April 1900.
The Government Resident, Justice Dashwood, supported the establishment of the club as a means of bolstering the Empire.

The South African war had shown, in no unmistakable manner that the British Empire was a united Empire, and he considered that whatever happened, we should always be prepared to defend ourselves … The British Empire was acknowledged to be the greatest in the world, and he felt sure that we, as Australians, would assist to maintain that reputation at the cost of our own blood if necessary.31

The Port Darwin Rifle Club was closely associated with the White establishment. This had underpinned the success of Palmerston rifle shooting and enabled it to be the only sport to increase in popularity between 1900 and 1911. Its members included police and senior civil servants who saw themselves as a private club. On occasions they defended their status by blackballing proposed members.32 In 1905, when membership in both cricket and athletics were at their lowest ebb, there were three rifle and gun clubs in Palmerston.33

Although shooting was a popular sport, the fears of the frontier were never distant. In April, Rusticus,34 in a letter to The Times asked,

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31 Ibid., 9 November 1900.
32 Ibid., 22 April 1904.
33 See Appendix 1D: Rifle and Gun Clubs, 1869-1911. The Port Darwin Rifle Club, the Palmerston Rifle Club and the Palmerston Gun Club which was centred on the BAT and shot clay targets from spring traps off the Esplanade into the sea. See Northern Territory Times, 21 October 1905.
34 Northern Territory Times, 7 April 1905.
Do any of the blackboys in the vicinity of Palmerston belong to the Defence Rifle Club? The reason I ask this seemingly ridiculous question is that while strolling on the beach, about the time the article referred to appeared, near the blacks camp, I came across a regular armoury containing several new rifles and hundreds of cartridges. I picked up a wrapper (I am sending you the same for inspection) and found it corresponds with those used to cover the M.H. cartridges [Martini Henry] formerly supplied to the members of the Defence Rifle Club. If the natives do belong to the Club are they honorary members and do they get their cartridges free? Otherwise how did they obtain possession of the rifles and cartridges bearing the government stamp?

There were confident replies that neither of the rifle clubs had Black members, honorary or otherwise. Some argued that the law should be a changed to ensure Blacks could not obtain firearms. After the boom in shooting in 1905, the general sporting apathy in Palmerston resulted in decline of interest in the sport.

Allen lived in a society where fears of a growing ‘coloured’ population were the subject of constant public commentary. The abhorrence and moral indignation that
Whites felt about the rise in the ‘half-caste’ population, and the fear that ‘filthy immorality’\(^35\) was rampant in the Territory, is illustrated by a letter to *The Times* by ‘Humane’, titled ‘The Black North’. \(^36\)

There are some people who are only capable of displaying the conduct of brutes; who try to conceal from the public eye that which would straight away brand them as despicable cowards, fit, indeed, only for the bare existence which may now and then be found with the water currents along the gutter … But when the ordinary white man has been privileged with all the advantages of a civilized education … it is difficult to understand why persons blessed with such advantages should so frequently be prompted to embrace the destiny surely attending vice and evil.

White anxiety was further exacerbated by insecurities about living in the tropics due to the multiple threats of ‘unusual temptations … the effect of their coloured surroundings’\(^37\) and ‘ill health and racial deterioration’.\(^38\) Participation in sport all year round defied the tropical weather and allayed fears of White decay. It reinforced the façade of British health and respectability by also maintaining an appropriate social distance from non-Whites through their exclusion from sport. Despite their best efforts, and the introduction of the Commonwealth’s White Australia policy which was widely applauded in Palmerston, social reality and demographics would make its implementation unachievable.

The 1901 the North Australia Cycling Club and North Australia Athletics Association combined annual sports was the first of many events to refute the pretence of a White Australia and highlight the policy dilemma.

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\(^35\) Ibid., 24 January 1908.
\(^36\) Ibid., 7 February 1902.
\(^37\) Ibid., 23 November 1906
\(^38\) Ibid., 30 November 1906. For a sample of similar articles see also 22 February 1907, 12 March 1907, 15 December 1912.
A glance at the crowd of spectators was calculated to set one wondering as to how the Federal Government is going to grapple with the problem of strictly adhering to its policy of a “White Australia” when it comes to take over the Northern Territory and its “multicoloured” population, a great number of whom have been born and reared here, and, therefore, presumably have the right to call themselves Australians and claim all the privileges attaching to that title.39

Although the crowd was ‘multicolored’, the sporting events remained a White domain, with the usual exception of a ‘Chinaman’s’ event thrown in for some light relief.

39 Ibid., 7 June 1901.
Although the Northern Territory Racing Club occasionally included Black jockeys in its events, unlike ‘up-country’ racing carnivals, there were enough White ‘gentlemen’ riders to discourage Black participation. Some White owners felt this disadvantaged them because Black riders were often superior. Prior to the annual races of 1902, the committee received a letter from T Sayle, a pastoralist from the Pine Creek area, enquiring if ‘blackboys’ would be issued jockeys’ licenses for the upcoming race meeting. The request was rejected, resulting in a dissatisfied Sayle attending the next meeting to seek clarification. There had been some confusion because, ‘the secretary’s intimation reading — “that no blackboys would be
permitted to ride,” whereas the resolution carried was “that no jockey’s licenses would be issued to blackboys”.

Black jockeys could ride at their own risk. Sayle’s response was reported as a ‘model of good taste, good manners, and sportsmanlike feeling — “he had no intention of taking advantage of the opportunity, and he didn’t even thank the committee for their offer.”

Despite the controversy, others were willing to use Black jockeys. In the final race of the meeting, ‘The beaten scrubbers’ race, a protest by the second placed horse was upheld against the winning horse Shamrock ‘ridden by a blackboy, [that] came rushing round into the straight with a wild swoop, the riders arms and legs revolving like the sails of the windmill, and won.’ The participation of Black riders would remain a point of contention within the club despite its difficulties in maintaining public support.

Horseracing was one of the only sports to continue through the later part of the nineteenth century but it was one of the first to suffer from the economic and social malaise that befell the Territory. In 1904 and 1905, there were no horse races in Palmerston, although races were held in Brocks Creek, Katherine, the Victoria River District, Arltunga and Alice Springs. In rekindling the Northern Territory Racing Club meeting in 1905, V V Brown invoked the Imperial connection by announcing ‘horse racing was one of the oldest and most popular forms of English sport, and it was a rare thing to find any English community without its annual race meeting’.

Cricket was also in the doldrums, with no games at all in Palmerston in 1905. Although the sport had spread for the first time to the mining communities of Brocks Creek and Pine Creek, the game’s popularity had waned considerably. During the

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40 Ibid., 1 August 1902.
41 Ibid., 1 August 1902.
42 Ibid., 15 August 1902.
43 Ibid., 23 April 1909.
44 Ibid., 14 July 1905.
45 Ibid., 25 May 1900. The first cricket game in Brocks Creek was played, 19 May 1900. 3 others were played in 1900 and another game is reported to have been played against a visiting Port Darwin Cricket Club over the Easter weekend. Northern Territory Times, 6 June 1902.
early 1900s, only a few games were played between local teams and occasionally against the passengers or crews of passing ships.\textsuperscript{47} It was during this period that Willie Allen returned to the Palmerston sporting scene.

Plate 27: Port Darwin Cricket Club c1900. [note the Aboriginal man sitting on the extreme right of photo.] (Unknown, HSNT Collection, NTAS, NTRS 1854, No 293)

**Patrons, Allegiances and Social Fluidity**

In 1900, C E Herbert was elected to represent the Northern Territory in the South Australian parliament. Willie Allen accompanied the family to South Australia and attended school in Adelaide.\textsuperscript{48} Although no record of Allen’s time in Adelaide has been found, it explains why there are no references to him in Palmerston sporting reports between 1900 and 1905. Herbert returned to Palmerston to take up the position of Government Resident in February 1905. Allen returned to Palmerston sports in 1906. He made an appearance as a jockey in the 1907 Northern Territory

\textsuperscript{46} Ibid., 2 September 1904. The Pine Creek Cricket Club played a game versus the Cosmo mine.
\textsuperscript{47} Ibid., 10 July 1903. vs SS Charon, 4 July 1903.
\textsuperscript{48} Alf May, Telephone Conversation, 20 July 2007.
Racing Club annual races and athletics in 1908; but it is in cricket that he enjoyed most success. Unfortunately for Allen, cricket in Palmerston during the first years of the 1900s was at its lowest point and few games were played. Nevertheless, when games were played Allen was to the fore.

In 1906 Allen was selected to play in one of Palmerston’s most prestigious sporting events — the Outcasts versus the Electrics cricket game. Allen was an Outcast. He was second top scorer although the game only confirmed to some that ‘cricket is not a fit game for the tropics in November.’ These matches had always been reserved for Palmerston’s White elite. There is no precedent or evidence that explains Allen’s involvement in Palmerston sport which had up to this time maintained strict racial segregation: much has to be assumed. Allen’s selection is most likely explained by his long connection to the Herbert family and the fact that he exhibited the behaviour and character expected of a ‘sportsman’.

In his examination of Isaac Murphy, America’s most celebrated and successful Black jockey in the late nineteenth century, David Wiggins contends; ‘Perhaps the secret of Murphy’s popularity was simply that he recognised the expectations of others.’ Murphy conformed to the cultural tastes and mores of the White racing fraternity and had the ‘singular ability to embrace the standards of the White man without sacrificing his own racial identity’. Tatz makes a similar point about Peter Jackson, a Black Virgin Islander who migrated to Australia as a child and who became Australia’s heavyweight champion in 1886. He describes Jackson as ‘a “gentleman”, one who seemed to conform to the prescription or ascription of one “who knew” his place.’ Tatz highlights the underlying dialectical problem that confronted so many

49 Northern Territory Times, 12 June 1908.
50 Ibid., 16 August 1907.
51 Ibid., 16 November 1906.
52 Wiggins, Glory Bound, 33.
53 Ibid.
54 Tatz, Obstacle Race, 109. See also Wiggins, ‘Peter Jackson and the Elusive Heavyweight Championship,’ in Glory Bound, 34–57,
Aboriginal and other non-White athletes. Racism can be suspended for some, under special circumstances and White approbation. The complex and conflicting dynamic of being vilified according to race while at the same time receiving admiration for conformity to the fickle expectations of critics, was a difficult balancing act. In his own way, and in very different circumstances, Allen, like Murphy and Jackson, found a way to negotiate and manage these dialectical contradictions. Such an onerous task was probably not possible without the support and assistance of others. Murphy developed alliances with employers and customers which may have strengthened his concern about White opinion, and as a consequence distanced himself to some extent from other Black athletes. Although such allegiances did not necessarily mean Black athletes lost their sense of separateness, Wiggins argued that social fluidity was ‘one of the greatest gifts of black athletes in American sport’. Although Allen never received the national and international acclaim of Murphy or Jackson, the evidence strongly indicates that he too ‘recognised the expectations of others’ and the value of allegiances.

When Allen returned from Adelaide to play in the Outcasts versus the Electrics cricket game, he must have been invited to play, or was perhaps nominated by Herbert. There can be no doubt that Allen would not have been considered to play on sporting talent alone; that had never been a criterion for Aboriginal participation in Palmerston sport. Nor is there any evidence to suggest that Allen’s Aboriginal background was unknown or made deliberately ambiguous in such a small community where he had lived for many years. Allen was of mixed descent and at a time when science argued that ‘the fuller the ‘blood’, the darker the skin, the closer one was to barbarism, savagery, heathenness and childlikeness; the lighter the skin, the nearer one stood to civility, civilisation and enlightenment’, it is nonetheless

55 Tatz, Obstacle Race, 110.
56 Wiggins, Glory Bound, 203.
57 Vasili, The First Black Footballer, 87. Arthur Wharton was at times deliberately ambiguous about his African origins as it made access to sport less difficult. See also Tatz, Obstacle Race, 190. Aboriginals were sometimes identified as ‘Pacific Islanders’ for greater White acceptance.
58 Tatz, Obstacle Race, 21.
clear that he met the approval of White teammates. It is also possible that under the patronage of Herbert, Allen was given special dispensation to play. Herbert had always been an enthusiastic sportsman and during his time as Government Resident acted as patron or president of the horseracing, athletics, rifle shooting and cricket club.\(^{59}\) Cricket itself was the epitome of British culture so Allen’s demeanour must have been considered exemplary. Unlike previous occasions when Blacks participated in cricket, there was no reference to Allen’s colour. It is likely that his participation in sport for the remainder of the 1900s was under similar circumstances but it was not just in deference to Herbert. Allen’s performances were as good, if not better, than his White sporting counterparts and this is the only way he could have maintained his place. It is highly unlikely that an underperforming Black or Coloured player would be tolerated in White sports, even with an influential ally. While it is likely that Allen received considerable support from Herbert, it cannot be assumed that he meekly acquiesced to the demands of others, or that he was a victim. There is no evidence that Allen agitated for greater rights for other Aboriginal or Coloured sportsmen; nor is there any indication that he denied his own racial identity. When faced with the rigid racial barriers of Palmerston, Allen, like others in comparable circumstance, appears to have made a deliberate choice. He accepted ‘that, as a black man, the offer to enter a world where respect and fame among one's peers and community was almost guaranteed, was too good to refuse, whatever the doubts raised and restrictions presented by a moral code designed by those unlikely to face such dilemmas.’\(^{60}\) Although it will be shown that the level of respect and fame that sport may have provided Allen in Palmerston is problematic, it was a rare opportunity that he grasped.

The 1906 Outcasts versus Electrics cricket game was the only one played that season. While it is difficult to pinpoint why this may have been the case, all sports were struggling to maintain the level of activity that they achieved in the 1890s and

\(^{59}\) Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sports and Leisure Database’.

early 1900s. In February 1908, the Port Darwin Cricket Club was re-formed and Allen played a number of games during the year. Perhaps due to the decline in sports, The Times editorialised at some length about the place that sports, and cricket in particular, had in their British society. It is perhaps the most vociferous sporting editorial during the South Australian Administration and worth quoting at length.

Many of our wisest and greatest have expressed the conviction that Great Britain’s present supreme position among nations is largely due to the manly qualities nourished and fostered by the almost universal practice of this national pastime [cricket] and the national love of sport generally; and that the moral effect of all forms of healthy out-door exercise is undoubtedly a good one. To excel in cricket, football, or any other line of athleticism, a man must live simply and cleanly and practice to some extent the self denying virtues of the old Spartacus [my emphasis] … Even in so out-of-the-way a corner of Australia as Port Darwin, with its handicap of enervating heat prevalent throughout the greater part of the year, and the fact that its population is largely of an ever shifting and changing variety which acts as a deterrent to stability or continuity of effort in many other directions besides cricket, we have our rifle ranges, tennis courts, cricket oval, and athletic association, and the characteristic spirit of the race has been sufficiently strong to keep most of these things moving after a more or less languid fashion. The local cricket club, it is true, has died and been brought back to life again several times, and it is presumably due to the present flood tide of cricketing enthusiasm engendered by the visit of the English Eleven that another effort is now being made to galvanise the local club into healthy exultant life once more.61

61 Northern Territory Times, 14 February 1908.
Despite the romantic imperial sentiments, and cricket’s role in ‘simple and clean living’, so important to community morality, the revival of the Port Darwin Cricket Club was short lived. After just three games the club disappeared from the sporting calendar and did not reappear until 1910. Allen’s sporting fortunes at this point were very closely linked to cricket so he too had to bide his time.

**Beyond the White Boundaries**

Although Allen’s experience indicates that Black participation in White sports was rare, there were other signs of change. Athletics had always included conditional, segregated non-White participation but during this period, some Coloured participation in White events occurred. Antonio Spain was born in Cebu, Philippines in 1863 and migrated to Australia to work as a trepang diver, and later a tailor, on Thursday Island. In 1885 he married Elizabeth Massey, an English woman, in Cairns and they moved to Darwin in 1894. Antonio worked as a barber in Darwin while Elizabeth proved herself to be an enterprising businesswoman who at various times ran a boarding house, a catering business and contracted on building projects. Between 1886 and 1909, Elizabeth had 11 sons and one daughter. Both Antonio and Elizabeth were highly regarded in the White community. From 1898 onwards, when Antonio competed in a North Australia Cycling Club ‘Manilla man’ race, the Spain name became well known in sporting circles, as members of the family participated regularly in athletics, cycling, rifle shooting and boxing. Their sporting participation began with children’s events and gradually they graduated to adult competition where they competed in the main White events. Like Allen, the Spain’s ‘colour’ does not appear to have been an issue and they too must have conformed to White sporting expectations. The good reputations of Antonio and Elizabeth, as well

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62 Ibid., 22 May, 10 June, 24 July 1908.
63 Lyn Spain, email to author, 20 December 2007. Massey was born in London in 1864 and in 1884 migrated alone to Australia arriving in Brisbane but later moved to Cairns where she was working as a domestic. The correspondence included genealogical information undertaken by Dr A Shnukal.
64 Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sport and Leisure Data Base’.
as being a long term Palmerston family, probably gave them an entry into White sport and their continued involvement indicates that they were well accepted.

Reports of non-White participation in Palmerston sport tended to be selective in the application of racial stereotypes. In a ‘first’ for a local Chinese, ‘Toby’ Ng King, described as the ‘local Chinese Champion’, played a series of billiard games against a [White] ‘Thursday Island visitor’. Ng King was victorious.65 Ng King reappeared in the news four years later when he played a visiting Western Australian billiardist, W Abotoney, drawing crowds of two hundred to the Victoria Hotel.66 A Spain67 operated the licensed billiard table and the large crowd was dominated by ‘the Asiatic element’. The games between ‘Toby – King player of the Celestials,’ characterised as ‘impassive,’ and the visitor, ‘who had “formed a rather exaggerated estimate of his own skill”.’ resulted in a victory to Ng King. 68 The Times correspondent assessed the result as ‘almost as damaging to white prestige as the recent Burns-Johnson combat.’69 Public acknowledgement of Chinese involvement in sport was rare but the interest engendered by the competitions could not be ignored.

Although continually marginalised, Blacks and Chinese persistently patronised sports events as spectators and played on their own when excluded. The Times reported that the billiards ‘contagion appears to have spread even to the blacks … Asiatic juveniles are also said to be similarly “billiard smitten.”’70 Although from an earlier period,

65 Northern Territory Times, 20 January 1905. Another series was played the following week. 27 January 1905.
66 Ibid., 12 January 1909.
67 Probably Antonio Spain.
68 Northern Territory Times, 12 March 1909.
70 Northern Territory Times, 2 April 1909.
Alfred Searcy, Sub-Collector of Customs in Palmerston, had also made similar observations:

The youngsters [Aboriginal] as a rule were lively, cheerful, mischievous little devils, and great mimics. Cricket was a favourite game with them, and it always seemed to me that there was infinitely more fun in watching a crowd of these black nippers at the game — their paraphernalia simply consisting of two sticks, a couple of rusty kerosene tins, and a ball of rags, than viewing the biggest cricket match ever played.  

There are also occasional glimpses that in private, Whites, Blacks and Chinese would play together. Fred Blakely devoted five pages describing impromptu cricket games he and his friends played in Darwin in 1907 between mixed teams made up of two Whites and ‘young Chinamen and Aboriginals to complete them.’ The games were further evidence that Whites, Blacks and Chinese were willing and able to play informally together but stereotypes and cultural taboos were difficult to overcome. The games attracted the ‘whole population of Chinatown … for they were keen cricketers, and the abo camp would there be in a body.’ But, according to Blakely, the games ceased because his White boss disapproved. Although the evidence is incomplete, these activities suggest that beyond the boundaries of public White sport there was a more diverse world of ‘hidden’ sporting activity.

Regardless of what occurred informally, public recognition of the Black, Coloured or Chinese community was rare, grudging and veiled. Social and racial segregation characterised Northern Territory society at a time when the ‘White Australia’ Policy was being developed as a cornerstone of the new Commonwealth Government. In 1909, The Times called for the expulsion of ‘Asiatic and coloured’ children from the

71 Searcy, In Australian Tropics, 349.
72 Fred Blakely, Hard Liberty (Sydney: George G Harrap & Company Ltd., 1938), 265.
73 Ibid., 268.
74 Ibid., 269.
public school so White students were not ‘disadvantaged’. W G Stretton, Protector of Aborigines, who had been resident in the Northern Territory since White settlement, gave a hint of what was to come in expressing his concern for the well-being of ‘half-caste’ boys whom he considered ‘unfortunate beings’ and that ‘a more complete control is most urgently required.’

An Aboriginal Champion

On the eve of the Commonwealth takeover in 1911, Willie Allen re-emerged onto Palmerston’s sporting scene at a time when Palmerston’s population and sporting activity were on the rise. Allen was living in Darwin’s Chinatown, on Cavenagh Street, at the time. Although there is no evidence of how he may have earned his living, a letter from Herbert Basedow granting a request from Allen to marry indicates that he was able to support his bride. This is further evidence that despite the growing desire to ‘control’ and regulate the lives of Aborigines, Allen continued to defy racial stereotypes and played sport within the White community. After an absence of over two years, he competed in the Palmerston Rifle Club’s close of season competition. Allen’s acceptance into the Rifle Club, a bastion of White society, is quite remarkable given the racial antagonism, and in particular, the fear Whites had of Aborigines with guns.

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75 Northern Territory Times, 2 April 1909.
76 Northern Territory. Report Government Resident for the Year 1910, Melbourne, 1911, 42.
77 Herbert Basedow, Department of Aboriginal Affairs, Office of the Chief Protector and Chief Medical Inspector, Letter to Willie Allen, 11 August 1911. This was Allen’s first marriage to Lilly Helliman. Helliman died in 1911. Northern Territory Times, 29 September 1911.
78 Northern Territory Times, 18 November 1910.
Issues of ‘race’ and ‘colour’ within a diverse mixed population became an increasingly important part of the continuous debate on Northern Territory race relations. The 1911 census figures confirm that, despite the White Australia Policy, Darwin was Australia’s most racially mixed town.\textsuperscript{79} Allen had his most successful sporting year in 1911, when at the age of twenty-five, he won prizes in both cricket and rifle shooting. In 1911, there was a reinvigoration of sport in the Northern Territory, particularly in Darwin. The advent of the Commonwealth administration resulted in an influx of civil servants, who had always played a significant role as sports organisers and participants in the town. There were also signs that athletics was remerging in the country when Pine Creek renewed its tradition of New Year’s Sports. The correspondent precisely identified that ‘there were about 68 Europeans present, and the field was dotted with Chinese and blacks.’\textsuperscript{80} The extensive program not only included races for boys and girls but also a ‘ladies’ race, which may be the first for adult women in Territory athletics.

\textsuperscript{79} Donovan, At the Other End of Australia. 4. Palmerston was officially renamed Darwin in 1911.
\textsuperscript{80} Northern Territory Times, 13 January 1911.
In a report of the opening of the 1911 cricket season, Allen was referred to for the first time as ‘Willy.’ The game also included Lloyd Herbert and E V V Brown, president of the Darwin Cricket Club and stalwart supporter of many sports. A month later, Allen scored the first century of the cricket season which secured him the Reade trophy. Allen continued to play cricket throughout the year, regularly featuring amongst the top scorers and bowlers. By mid season Allen was top of both the batting and bowling averages, 50 and 7 respectively. He also competed in two athletics carnivals during the year: the Coronation Sports in June and the North Australian Cycling and Athletics Association Sports in October where he competed in a number of events, including the ‘Blackboys race.’ As stated earlier, this is the only sporting event where Allen was identified as an Aborigine. This appears to be a curious anomaly because his Aboriginality was not reported previously. It is impossible to determine what the racial politics of this decision to enter the

81 Ibid., 28 April 1911.
82 Ibid., 26 May 1911.
83 Ibid., 12 August 1911.
84 Ibid., 6 October 1911.
‘Blackfellows race’ may have been. It may have been as simple as wanting to secure the ten shilling prize, but having competed with Whites in a sack race earlier in the day and also being partnered with a White, A Brown, in a ‘Siamese race,’ it was not because he was ‘restricted’ to Black only races.

More sporting success followed for Allen. At the Palmerston Rifle Club closing day Allen received seven shillings six pence from Mrs E Ryan, well known publican of the Victoria Hotel, for his sixth place in the competition.85 Greater accolades were to come from the Darwin Cricket Club, which acknowledged Allen as ‘the best all round player in the club by annexing no less than three out of six possible prizes. He is a good field, a safe bat, and at times has shown himself to be a tip-topper with the ball.’86 Allen received the President’s trophy for the highest batting average from E V Brown, and the best bowling trophy from H F Gray from the BAT as well as having received the Reade trophy earlier in the year.87 Such achievements mark Allen as the Northern Territory’s first Aboriginal sports champion. Despite his awards, they do not appear to have gained him an invitation to the club’s end of year concert which featured the Darwin Nigger Minstrels, made up of his White cricket team mates.88

Allen’s sporting year concluded in December when a number of sporting and social events were held to celebrate the visit of H M S Prometheus. Allen was selected to represent Darwin in both a shooting match and the first British Association football match to be held in the town.89 Sports events against visiting British warships were considered special events because it gave the locals an opportunity to demonstrate their talents against Britain’s ‘finest’. Allen’s selection in this prestigious game made Allen the first Aborigine selected to a Darwin representative team.

85 Ibid., 20 October 1911.
86 Ibid., 20 November 1911.
87 Ibid.
88 Ibid. Performers in concerts are identified but not all guests.
89 Ibid., 5 January 1912.
As the South Australian and Commonwealth Governments negotiated the transition of administration and developed a legislative response to the complex race relations of the Northern Territory, non-European rights were not acknowledged, resulting in Aborigines, Chinese and other ‘aliens’ being considered a ‘problem’ to be solved, removed or ‘dispersed’. The isolated and largely powerless Northern Territory administration based in Palmerston / Darwin was content to allow the very distant local authorities and White settlers a free hand in determining the nature of race relations beyond the town’s borders in the belief that such actions were necessary for the growth of the Territory. The ambivalence and neglect of Government affairs beyond their latticed verandas overlooking the Arafura Sea was matched only in their enthusiasm and application to recreate a British middle class enclave on its shores. The attitudes of the civil servants reflected their perception of what a ‘civilised’ society should be. If they could continue cricket, horseracing and quadrilles in the tropical Northern outpost then surely ‘civilisation’ was assured.

A ‘Measure of Hope’

Willie Allen’s sporting experiences showed that change was possible and his admission to White sport was a precursor of events to come during the Commonwealth Administration of the Northern Territory. His admission, and to a lesser extent that of the Spain family, to White sport, illustrates that social boundaries could shift. White perceptions of colour, for those who conformed to ‘respectable’ behaviour, were selectively malleable and ambiguous. Their inclusion in sport offered a ‘measure of hope’ to those who followed. Although Allen’s circumstances were by no means typical, he overcame racial stereotypes and segregation that had excluded or marginalised non-White participation since White settlement and negotiated his own place in sport and society demonstrating that ‘race’ is a dynamic and changing construct that differs according to political

90 Hoberman, Darwin’s Athletes, xxiv.
Allen proved that by talent and tenacity Aborigines could compete with Whites.

Although it is clear that the racial caste barriers were shifting, they were by no means broken: admission was conditional. Individuals who conformed to White expectations and cultural mores could gain entry to the White world of sport but this alone was not enough. Support from a prominent patron or from within the White community in general were also essential to gain White sanction and acceptances. Allen had prised open the door of White sporting segregation but for the majority of aspiring non-White athletes it remained firmly closed and the struggle for greater equality and rights had not begun. During the Commonwealth’s administration of the Northern Territory, Darwin’s sports fields would become a public stage to demonstrate non-Whites’ sporting talents, challenging White domination of sport and fighting for rights beyond the boundary.

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Part III: The Often Told Story: Australian Football in Darwin: The Commonwealth Administration, 1911-1953
Chapter 6: The End of an Era: The Commonwealth Control of the Northern Territory, 1911–1920

The introduction of football here will do much to discredit the theory that White Australia cannot develop in the Northern Territory.¹

Commonwealth Control

The Commonwealth of Australia took control of the Northern Territory on 1 January 1911. Most residents felt that life could only improve after reaching rock bottom during the final years of the South Australian administration, an era characterised by ‘bitter failure and abject resignation’.² Buoyed by the optimism of change, no one predicted just how tumultuous the initial years of the Commonwealth’s administration would be. Darwin was transformed from a sleepy colonial outpost to a rebellious ‘Bolshevist’ stronghold, ‘shaken to its foundations’³ by war, industrialisation and class conflict.

World War I and the construction of Vesteys Meatworks in 1914 was the first time Darwin felt the affects of industrialisation and urbanisation that had been so much a part of the Age of Empire and the development of sport elsewhere. The resultant population explosion precipitated the rise of a working class union movement that introduced overt class politics to the Territory. Union influence also extended to Australian football which was introduced to Darwin in 1916 and which revolutionised Northern Territory sport.

² Bauer, Historical Geography, 194.
³ Ewing, Report on Northern Territory Administration, CPP 28/1920, 4–5.
Football the world over is a site of struggle. The values invested in it, why it is played, who plays it and who controls it, reveals a great deal about society. In Darwin’s multi-racial community, sport, and in particular football, was a powerful catalyst for change, the Darwin oval a contested political terrain. As the only distinctly Australian contribution to the British Empire’s manly sports, it reflected the historical legacy of *homo ludens imperiosus* in Darwin while also acting as an agency of social change representing a more modern and distinctly Australian sporting identity. Darwin oval became a ‘theatre of dreams’ where social, political and ideological battles were played out weekly. These battles also emphasised sport’s paradoxical nature by both connecting and disconnecting socio-cultural groups within Darwin. Football played a critical role in developing cross-cultural allegiances that forged a multi-racial identity which challenged and subverted the Commonwealth’s ideal of a White Australia. Tensions in football did not occur in isolation but were paralleled by events in the Darwin union movement. These resulted in the interests of the town’s working class and Coloured communities becoming increasingly entwined.

At the time of the Commonwealth takeover, the White Australia policy, in keeping with British colonial policy world-wide, was based on the understanding that racially mixed societies should be segregated. The presence of a servile underclass to maintain the comforts and prestige of a British society was taken for granted. Darwin’s self appointed White ‘elite’, known as the ‘Silvertails’, had been unchanged and unchallenged since the 1880s. The ‘Silvertails’ devoted considerable energy into maintaining Darwin as a bastion of the British Empire.

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5 Grant Farred, “‘Theatre of Dreams”: Mimicry and Difference in Cape Flats Township Football,” in *Sport and Postcolonialism*, 125.
6 Martinez, ‘Ethnic Policy and Practice in Darwin’, 123.
But, my dear, you had cards in those days when people called … and the natives [servants] would come to the door and he'd hold the pearl shell out and you would put your card in it, and then he would take it inside and see if his mistress would see you, you see. And then he would say, ‘All right, missus home. Would you come in please.’ And they were very polite, and then we always had a native sitting on the verandah, working a punkah.”

Plate 30: A Silvertail picnic, [c1900s]. (Unknown, HSNT Collection, NTAS, NTRS1854, No 1381)

Elsie Masson, daughter of Melbourne University Professor David Orme Masson, and who would later marry the anthropologist Bronislaw Malinowski, lived at the Administrator’s residence for a time, and was an astute observer of Darwin society. In 1915, she wrote:

8 See the Australian online Dictionary of Biographies – Online edition. http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A100424b.htm?hilite=Sir%3BDavid%3BOrme%3BMasson
Life in Darwin is made up of many little worlds, each continuing in its own way, impinging on, but never mingling with the others. There is the life of white officialdom, the Eastern life of Chinatown, the life of the pearling fleets and, under all, the life of the native camps. A visitor may spend a week there, and the existence of these separate worlds may never dawn upon him.  

Between 1911 and 1918, Darwin’s ‘little worlds’ changed irreversibly. The advent of the union movement altered forever the social and political balance. The institutions that had sustained and maintained sport throughout the South Australian era fractured under the enormous pressure placed on them by new union-based sports organisations. Amidst the social and political upheaval, sporting racial barriers also began to weaken. New sports like boxing provided opportunities for Black and Coloured involvement. Willie Allen’s experience demonstrated that it was possible for Coloured athletes to join White sport if they conformed to White expectations and mores. Allen and other select Coloured footballers would continue this pattern by joining the embryonic football league and prove that they could not only compete regularly with and against Whites, they could excel.

In the first months of Commonwealth control there were no signs of the events that would transform Darwin’s social and sporting landscape. The transfer of government and the influx of new public servants reinvigorated the towns’ moribund sports activities. The Commonwealth’s ‘White Australia’ policy was viewed with scepticism because it denied the multiracial social reality of Darwin.  

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10 Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 2. See also Martinez, ‘Plural Australia’, 32.
The crowd was of the usual cosmopolitan character — complexions ranging from the dark skinned native aborigine, through various shades to the white epidermis of the dominant Caucasian. … There were types present of many races — Japanese, Javanese, Chinese, Cingalese, Arabs, Africans, Phillipinos, and muscular islanders from South Seas with many nondescript gradations between the more sharply defined types, evolved from circumstances and propinquity. …the Caucasian element predominated perhaps but ‘colour’ of varying shades was so pronounced that the ardent White Australia faddist glancing around the grounds might well be excused for feeling a trifle despairful of ever seeing his patriotic ideal realized in this tropical portion of Australia.11

Sports programs confirmed that public attitudes towards non-Whites and social boundaries continued to shift. For the first time the formal program of the North Australian Cycling and Athletics Association Sports of 1911 included a ‘Blackfellows’ race, ‘Blackfellows’ hurdle race and ‘Black boys’ race. There were also races for junior boys and girls and a Chinese foot race. Among the ‘Caucasian elements’ in Darwin was Baldwin Spencer, one of a number of Commonwealth ‘experts’ appointed to a scientific party to assess the needs of its newly acquired possession. He was Professor of Biology at the University of Melbourne, and had previously been in the Northern Territory as part of the 1894 Horn Expedition to Central Australia, and on other occasions.12 Spencer also noted the cosmopolitan nature of Darwin sports meetings.

11 Northern Territory Times, 30 June 1911.
12 Spencer was a keen supporter of sport at Melbourne University. He was president of the University Sports Union and secured the entry of the University football team into the Victorian Football League in 1908. He would later become president of the VFL 1919–1926. See the Australian online Dictionary of Biographies – Online edition. http://www.adb.online.anu.edu.au/biogs/A120043b.htm?hilite=Spencer%3BBaldwin
This afternoon there was a sports meeting which was a most remarkable gathering. There were almost 250 people there — excluding the natives — [illegible] a mix up of whites, Chinese, Malays, half castes of all kinds and full blooded blacks. Of course it was very hot but this did not seem to make any difference to them. The last race was the girls' which was won by a little black girl.13

**Unions**

In 1911, while Spencer was devising a new regime for Aboriginal affairs in the Northern Territory, another significant social change was under way in Darwin — the advent of the union movement. In January, White labourers on the wharf called a strike for better wages and were successful in gaining improved pay and assurances that White labour would be used on the wharf in the future. In December, they again called a strike, complaining that a Darwin shipping agent used Chinese labour. The outcome was the formation of a branch of the North Queensland-based Amalgamated Workers Association, which would amalgamate two years later with the Australian Workers Union (AWU).14 The rise of the union movement and the politics of class, which accompanied it, were not restricted to industrial matters. The unions sponsored a number of workers’ social and sporting clubs from 1912.

The last vestiges of the South Australian administration were removed when Dr John Anderson Gilruth replaced Acting Administrator, Justice S J Mitchell. Gilruth’s administration from 1912 to 1919 was one of the most controversial and tempestuous in Northern Territory history but initially he was welcomed. The ceremonies that marked Mitchell’s departure and Gilruth’s arrival were further indication of Darwin’s changing social landscape. In a speech to Mitchell, the Chinese delegation indicated that their interests were under pressure from the unions. The latter flexed their industrial muscle to the point that Chinese ‘rights and privileges have been threatened by certain parties who would say to our people that they are trespassers on

13 Baldwin Spencer, ‘Diaries, of W B. Spencer, 1911–1913,’ ML, Sydney, 26 June 1911.
14 Brian, ‘One Big Union’, 2.
Gilruth’s arrival was followed soon after by a Commonwealth parliamentary party led by the Minister of External Affairs, the Honourable Josiah Thomas. Various welcomes were organised and significantly, the Australian Workers Association was ‘promised’ the first night, indicating how quickly the unions had taken the lead in Darwin society. In the past, such a ‘promise’ would have been to a civic welcome organised by Darwin’s ‘leading citizens’. During this function, the idea of a workers’ club in Darwin was suggested to the Minister. It received his support and a club was formed in May 1912. The Workers Club, in its various manifestations, became the dominant social and sporting organisation in Darwin. The most significant aspect of union involvement in organising sport was that it loosened the stranglehold the White ‘elite’ had held since 1869. The cosy interdependent world of the Silvertails could no longer dictate terms on social or sporting events. The simple cohesion given by a world divided by race, a White ‘us’ versus a Black or Coloured ‘them’, that had served them well during the South Australian administration was shattered. The process that recast Darwin’s White society on lines of class would accelerate until World War II. Although new social structures emerged, they were less certain and more splintered: a world of departmental heads and ‘staff’, managers

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15 Northern Territory Times, 12 April 1912.
16 Ibid., 19 April 1912.
17 Ibid.
18 Ibid.
19 Ibid., 26 April 1912.
and workers, unionists and non-unionists, old-hands and new-comers. This unsettled social world opened up possibilities for new patrons and allegiances.

The emergent social divisions of Darwin were matched by the introduction of physical boundaries to segregate Darwin’s Aboriginal population from the town. Darwin’s Kahlin Compound was established in 1912 by Spencer. Although Aborigines had been continually pushed to the fringes of Darwin since White settlement, there had been no attempt to physically confine them. Darwin’s Aboriginal camps were broken up and their occupants forced to relocate there while the town was declared a ‘prohibited’ area, requiring them to acquire a special permit to work there.20 The compound was situated two and a half kilometres from town on Myilly point, distant enough to isolate the inmates from town while at the same time being close enough for them to walk there for work. Spencer’s new regime paid special attention to the ‘half-caste question’, people who numbered approximately 300.21 His original intention to separate ‘half-caste’ children from their parents and to place them on reserves with people of ‘full’ Aboriginal descent,22 was altered so that by 1913 they had been placed in gender segregated dormitories at Kahlin and attended its new school. There were high hopes for the school; ‘a new era in the development of the aboriginal race in the Territory’ by providing ‘both moral and religious training’.23 Those forced to live there considered it ‘a starvation camp’ overseen by brutal supervisors who attempted to control every aspect of their lives.24

Although the union movement’s rapid rise resulted in significant shifts in Darwin’s social dynamics, it reinforced White racist sentiments. White racism was not the only reason Northern Territory unions developed, but antagonism towards Asian workers

20 Austin, I Can Picture the Old Home So Clearly, 45.
21 Spencer, Preliminary Report, CPP 45/1913, 46.
22 Ibid., 47.
23 Northern Territory Times, 13 November 1913.
24 Val McGinness, Oral history interview by Janet Dickson, NTRS 226, TS 532, NTAS, Darwin, 1984, Tape 1, 5. See also Austin, I Cans Picture The Old Home So Clearly, 57.
was an important catalyst. In contradiction to national AWU policy, which included Aboriginal membership, the Darwin branch excluded them. The prevailing attitudes were well illustrated at a unique public ceremony in December 1912 at the Administrator’s Residence ‘celebrating’ the award of an Albert Medal for gallantry, granted by the King of Britain, to Neighbour, a Roper River Aborigine. Neighbour, who was under arrest for cattle stealing, was being brought to court in Darwin by Mounted Constable Johns, the man he saved from drowning in a flooded river crossing. Neighbour, in leg irons, plunged into the river and dragged Johns to safety. Baldwin Spencer expressed great satisfaction at Neighbour’s actions ‘because they went far to prove that these children of nature were capable of higher things’. Bishop White (Church of England Bishop of Carpentaria) demonstrated that Social Darwinism still underpinned the thinking of many.

The fashion these days was to regard the aboriginal as something even beneath contempt. In fact one scientist – Haeckel – had gone so far as to say that the Australian aboriginal was little better than the anthropoid ape. But those who had any knowledge of the aboriginal at all knew this to be false. They might be described as a child race mentally with all the keen observation of children and all their capacity for growth.

Racism was a perpetual feature of Darwin’s social milieu and extended to the Asian ‘threat’ to the north. Gilruth gave the major speech at a Darwin Rifle Club and Cable Guard smoke-social.

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26 Martinez, ‘Plural Australia’, 82.
27 Northern Territory Times, 19 December 1912.
28 Ibid., 19 December 1912.
29 A smoke-social was a common social gathering in Darwin usually restricted to males.
The picture always associated in his mind in thinking of this Territory was that of the Malayan Archipelago, with its teeming millions, stretching down to within a few hours’ sail of Darwin; and beyond that were the vast population of the near east. When they regarded that picture attentively, they could better grasp the urgency of the need for settling a strong white population on this northern coast. … For the first time in the history of the British Empire an attempt was being made to settle a tropical country with white people. … the white Australia ideal had to be carried out. That was the national policy.30

Gilruth’s hyperbole in ignoring British colonial experience in Africa, India and South East Asia aside, his speech encapsulated contemporary social attitudes and reinforced the belief that Aborigines were the antithesis of ‘settlement’. Racial stereotypes and paranoia were not confined to fear of the ‘teeming millions’ of nearby Asia or Blacks, but embraced the ongoing fear that the White population was also threatened from within because ‘the tendency of a white race living in the tropics is downwards, as far as physical, mental and moral characteristics are concerned’.31 Such fears were widespread and bolstered support for sport, which persistently heralded the Britishness and vitality of the White community.

The unions’ growing influence, facilitated by the Darwin Workers Amusement Club, was soon at the heart of many of Darwin’s social and sporting events.32 At its foundation meeting, the club moved to start a brass band and to hold a concert.33 A few weeks later the club committee announced that Administrator Gilruth had agreed to act as patron. This continued the convention of the South Australian

30 Northern Territory Times, 13 March 1913.
31 Ibid., 15 May 1913. An good summary of these beliefs can be found in Martinez, ‘Plural Australia’, 38–68. See also Anderson, The Cultivation of Whiteness, 73–85.
32 Northern Territory Times, 16 April 1914. Darwin Workers Amusement Club replaced the Darwin Workers Club which ceased its activities and formally handed over its finances and assets to it in April 1914.
33 Ibid., 14 August 1913.
administration, and the British Empire in general, but it is significant in the light of later events.

The Darwin Workers Amusement Club was indicative of a wider international workers sports movement that had developed in Britain, the United States and Europe from the 1890s. Broadly speaking these organisations provided working people with opportunities to participate in healthy, enjoyable social and physical activity. The movement fought for greater leisure opportunities in the form of a shorter working week recognising that sport was an integral part of many working class communities and an important means of counterbalancing the stresses of industrialised life. Although the international workers sport movement was part of the greater class struggle and used sport for their own political ends, it never threatened the dominant traditions of professionalism or established amateur sporting hegemonies. The ascent of Darwin’s union based workers sport organisations to a predominant position is atypical and reflects the transformation of political, class and social relationships during this period.

New Sports

The influx of workers gave impetus to the introduction and development of new sports. Boxing had not featured in the Northern Territory, despite its popularity in other parts of Australia. Northern Territory boxing was essentially an ‘underground’ activity until 1913. The world heavyweight championship between White Canadian, Tommy Burns, and Black American, Jack Johnson, in Sydney, on Boxing Day 1908, was still fresh in people’s minds. The Australian press portrayed the event as ‘the attempted usurpation of white privilege, as the venue for putting all blacks in their place, as the ultimate contest for white supremacy’. Jackson’s victory sent shock waves around the world and thrust the politics of race and sport onto centre

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37 Northern Territory Times, 1 February 1879. The Times discouraged prize fighting by refusing to accept advertisements for events. There are no further reports of boxing competitions until 1913 although there are occasional reports of informal bouts.

38 Tatz, Obstacle Race, 108.
stage. In Darwin, where the Burns-Johnson fight had not gone unnoticed, non-White participation in boxing was strictly controlled. 39

Photographs suggest that boxing contests between Aborigines were part of the Labour Day picnic in 1910, although there are no reports corroborating this. 40 In July 1913, The Times reported that the Palmerston Town Council had received an application to use the town hall for boxing but it was refused on the grounds that ‘several of the ratepayers have very strong objections to the use of the Town Hall for such an exhibition’. 41 Boxing promoters were not deterred and a tournament was held at the ‘Stadium’, owned by the Budgen family, owners of the Terminus Hotel on the corner of Bennett and Cavenagh Street, on 17 October 1913. 42 The evening’s proceedings commenced with a bout between two Manilamen (Filipinos), Cardo and Gar, 43 but the other bouts featured White boxers. Boxing grew in popularity in the following years and Aboriginal and Asian participation grew proportionally.

39 See Chapter 5. Northern Territory Times, 12 March 1909. re: billiard player, Toby Ng King, a Darwin Chinese man’s victory over a White opponent was compared to the impact of the Burns-Johnson fight.

40 See Plate 31 above.

41 Northern Territory Times, 31 July 1913.

42 Ibid., 23 October 1913.

43 Palencio Gar was born in the NT in 1894, the son of Carlos Gar who immigrated to the Northern Territory from the Philippines in 1870. Gar is described as a ‘half caste Malay’ in his Australian Military Forces, Australian Imperial Force, Attestation Paper of Person Enlisted for Service Abroad. Series no. B2455. He was one of Gar brothers to enlist in the AIF.
The Darwin Workers Amusement Club sponsored the next boxing event held in March 1914. Again held at the Stadium, the promoter, F C Miller, organised a full program. Attended by H E Carey, the Acting Administrator, the program began with an under-card of two ‘boys’, presumably Aboriginal boxers, followed by two Chinese ‘boys.’ The main events followed with the ‘star turn’ of White boxers F Conway versus J Bird, who would fight many bouts during this period.\textsuperscript{44} The advent of boxing events organised by entrepreneurial promoters catering to paying spectators was new to the Northern Territory. Although horseracing and sports days had drawn large crowds in the past, this was because they were considered special annual events or part of public holiday celebrations. The privately run ‘Stadium’ was a new sporting development that provided a venue for the commercial exploitation of a growing workforce starved of public entertainment. Black, Coloured and Chinese boxers were an integral part of most boxing programs during this period although only on the undercard. Their role remained that of gladiatorial entertainers to warm up the crowd for the ‘main’ events featuring White boxers. Nevertheless, it provided opportunities to participate in public sport and indicated a new level of inclusion and

\textsuperscript{44} Northern Territory Times, 19 March 1914.
acceptance, albeit conditional, of non-White sportsmen. This acceptance would extend to other new sports that accompanied the rapid rise in population following the announcement of Vestey’s meatworks.

![Figure 3: Northern Territory Population 1911–1954. (Source: Northern Territory Administrators’ Reports, 1911–1955; Wells, et. al., eds. Modern Frontier, Appendix A, Table 3, 187.)](image)

**War and Industry**

In April 1914, Vestey Brothers (known as Vesteys), a British multinational meat conglomerate, agreed to establish a meat-processing and freezing works in Darwin. Negotiations to establish the meatworks had begun in 1912. Many were optimistic that it would extricate the Northern Territory from the economic stagnation that had hindered development since the turn of the century.\(^{45}\) The agreement to develop the meatworks included the decision to pass the *Pine Creek to Katherine River Railway Act 1913*, which further boosted the economy. The construction and operation of Vesteys, from 1914 to 1919, would prove the catalyst for the rapid transformation of

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\(^{45}\) Frank Alcorta, *Darwin Rebellion 1911–1919* (Darwin: Northern Territory History Unit Planning Authority, 1984), 19.
the social, political and economic landscape of Darwin, and to a lesser extent the Northern Territory, commenced by the introduction of unions just three years before. The industrialisation of the Darwin workforce resulted in a trebling of the White population (concentrated in Darwin) from 1,173 in 1911, to 3,767 in 1918.46

Significantly, most of this growth can be attributed to the development of a White labouring class. They fuelled the rise of the local union movement, whose militant activities culminated in what is sometimes termed the ‘Darwin Rebellion’, in 1918. The declaration of World War I, in August 1914, further exacerbated the ‘hothouse’ atmosphere in Darwin. Sport, which boomed in the early years of the war, became closely associated with the war effort as a means of unifying the community, providing recreation and entertainment for the predominantly male population and raising funds. The population growth also gave the critical mass necessary to support and sustain the establishment of football in Darwin.

Soon after Australia entered World War I, Mrs J Gilruth, the Administrator’s wife, convened a meeting to form a Darwin branch of the Red Cross.47 The organisation was active throughout the war and became the focus of most of Darwin’s fund-raising efforts, either directly organising or receiving the funds generated by social and sporting events.48 Branches were formed in all of the urban centres of the Territory and by 1918 the membership had grown to 145, which included 100 women — almost the total White female population of the Territory.49 The men of the Territory also answered the call with the first Northern Territory Volunteer contingent of twenty-two raised in September.50 There were at least five Northern

47 Northern Territory Times, 20 August 1914.
48 The Northern Territory Red Cross raised more funds per capita during WWI than any other Australian jurisdiction. James, No Man’s Land, 89.
50 Northern Territory Times, 1 October 1914.
Territory Volunteer contingents and, in total, 250 men joined the Australian Imperial Force, proportionally more than any other part of Australia.  

Plate 33: [Darwin Brass Band, a parade featuring the AWU. Maybe the Eight-Hour Day Sports]. (Unknown, HSNT Collection, NTAS, NTRS 1854, No 1321).

The influx of workers constructing the meat-works at Bullocky Point made an immediate impact on Darwin sports, then almost completely controlled by Darwin’s unions. The extent of union influence in athletics was illustrated in the organisation of the Eight-hour Sports meeting in October 1915. The organising committee was made up of two representatives each from the Australian Workers Union, Carpenters and Joiners, Engineers Society, Northern Territory Public Service Association and Post, Telegraph and Customs Departments. Any proceeds from the sports were voted to the Trades Hall erection fund. Another indication that the power and control of Darwin sports had shifted was that the Northern Territory Racing Club, the only  

51 Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 28; James, No Mans Land, 89.  
52 Northern Territory Times, 25 February 1915. In February 1915, the Darwin Workers Amusement Club elected to change its name to the Darwin Recreation Club after a suggestion from Administrator Gilruth, who remained club patron.  
53 Ibid., 2 September 1915.
sporting club remaining in Darwin from the South Australian period, was struggling for public support. Although the 26th Northern Territory Racing Club annual races were held in 1910, they were not well received and were not held again until 1915.

Plate 34: Grand Stand, Darwin, 1915. [note the well dressed Aboriginal group under the tree on the left of the photo]. (Jack Roden, Jack Roden Collection, NTAS, NTRS 1744, No 339).

Although swimming was a popular recreation in Darwin since the construction of the Fort Hill Baths in the 1880s, swimming competitions were rare and there had been no organised club. The Darwin Swimming Club was formed in August 1915.\textsuperscript{54} Members immediately set about organising working bees to construct terraces on the hillside overlooking the baths in preparation for its first carnival.\textsuperscript{55} The inaugural Northern Territory Swimming Championships, held in October 1915, were heralded as a tribute to the health of White men in the tropics.

\textsuperscript{54} Ibid., 19 August 1915.
\textsuperscript{55} Ibid., 2 September 1915.
Those who labour under the impression that the Northern Territory is no place for White men would have done well to have attended the Darwin Swimming Club’s Carnival, …the born and bred Northern Territorians have given a good account of themselves … The Northern Territory Champion Cup, … remains with Darwin in the charge of Reuben Cooper, who won easily from 12 starters.\textsuperscript{56}

\begin{figure}
\centering
\includegraphics[width=\textwidth]{Northern_Territory_Natives_Race_Darwin_baths_Nov_20th_1915.png}
\caption{Plate 35: Northern Territory Natives Race. Darwin baths, Nov 20th 1915. (Unknown, E D W S Donnison Collection, SL NSW, MMA 890/3 0208).}
\end{figure}

\section*{Reuben Cooper}

Reuben John Cooper was born on 6 February 1898 at Wandi near Pine Creek. Little is known of his early childhood.\textsuperscript{57} His father, Joe Cooper, was an Englishman who arrived in the Northern Territory in the late 1870s with his brother Harry, via Riverton in South Australia.\textsuperscript{58} His mother Alice was an Iwadja woman from the Cobourg Peninsula. Joe was a drover, miner, crocodile hunter and keen sportsman

\textsuperscript{56} Ibid., 21 October 1915.
\textsuperscript{57} Ann Briggs, ‘Cooper, Reuben John,’ in Northern Territory Dictionary of Biography, Vol 1, 62.
\textsuperscript{58} Giles, ‘Diaries of Giles Family’, 5.
who participated at various times in rifle shooting,\textsuperscript{59} cricket\textsuperscript{60} and athletics.\textsuperscript{61} It is likely that Reuben accompanied his father to live on Melville Island where he established a buffalo shooting enterprise in 1905.\textsuperscript{62} It was during this time that Joe Cooper’s reputation grew and he became known as the ‘white Rajah’ of Melville Island.\textsuperscript{63} His reputation as a legendary figure was critical to Reuben’s status. At a time when White men would rarely admit to relationships with Aborigines, Joe lived with and acknowledged his family. He supported Reuben throughout his life.

The first notice of Reuben’s sporting prowess came in 1907 when he competed in three events in the annual Palmerston Sunday School picnic.\textsuperscript{64} He was sent to boarding school in Adelaide from 1908 to 1915 although there is some contention between the oral testimony and the documentary record about the school he attended.\textsuperscript{65} What is clear is that he developed his exceptional sporting talents during this time. Reuben’s re-entry into Darwin sports after an absence of eight years in Adelaide was as spectacular as most of his sporting career. He became Darwin’s leading sportsman although newspaper reports gave no indication of his Aboriginality. Cooper was obviously considered a ‘local’ and there was no reference to his ‘colour’. The fact that Cooper swam in the main events rather than the ‘native’

\textsuperscript{59} Northern Territory Times, 27 April 1878.
\textsuperscript{60} Ibid., April 1881, 23 October 1884, 25 March 1885.
\textsuperscript{61} Ibid., 29 April 1885, 1 January 1886, 10 March 1886, 7 January 1898.
\textsuperscript{63} Mulvaney, Paddy Cahill, 13.
\textsuperscript{64} Northern Territory Times, 26 July 1907.
\textsuperscript{65} No evidence was found of Cooper’s formal education in South Australia. Mulvaney’s, Paddy Cahill, suggests that Cooper may have attended St Stephen’s boarding school in Wakefield Street, but no records remain. (Email to author, Janet Winkler, Archivist/Records Manager, Anglicare, 20 June 2006). Oral testimony consistently says Cooper attended Prince Alfred College but there is no evidence of enrolment. (Email to author, Tony Aldous, Prince Alfred College Archivist, 10 July 2006). Occasionally Cooper is also said to have attended St Peters College, but again, there is no evidence of enrolment. (Email to author, Robert Fischer, St Peter's College Archivist, 17 August 2006). It is certain that Cooper did attend school in Adelaide and that he also had some contact with his South Australian family. (Email to author, Neil Thomas, Archivist State Library of South Australia, 14 February 2007).
race indicates that he was accepted within the White community. Certainly, as Joe Cooper’s son, few wished to offend the father, then still competing in athletics.\textsuperscript{66}


In 1915, sport in Darwin still reflected and reinforced the racist colonial social values that had typically denied non-White participation in sport. Despite Willie Allen’s sporting achievements in the previous decade, he had been an anomaly. Sport continued to play a critical role in maintaining the façade of British respectability in Darwin by excluding or segregating all non-Whites. This was all about to change. Although Allen had shown that it was possible for Aborigines to break the sporting caste barrier, it was Reuben’s success that was the catalyst for a sustained public challenge to the White domination and control of Darwin sport. His schooling

\textsuperscript{66} Northern Territory Times, 7 January 1915.
experience parallels that of Willie Allen’s and so does his apparent conformity to the cultural expectations of the White sporting fraternity who embraced him as their champion. Where Allen and Cooper’s experiences diverge is the lasting public recognition Cooper received while Allen was all but forgotten. Cooper became Darwin’s best known sportsman during the period 1915 to 1939 and personified a period of remarkable sporting transition from exclusion to domination.

Willie Allen continued to participate in Darwin sports although less often than in 1911. His prowess in rifle shooting gave him rare recognition from the Government Resident who noted that ‘one of the Cable Guard is a half-caste; … he is one of the smartest and most reliable young soldiers in the Corps. His white comrades think highly of him, for, in addition to his general military efficiency, his is a fine shot and a good all-round athlete and sport.’ Allen’s place within the White community extended to an attempt to join the Australian Imperial Force, with other members of the Cable Guard, on the outbreak of the war but it was rejected on medical grounds. Like other Aborigines who attempted to enlist early in the war, Allen’s rejection was probably due to his Aboriginality but such restrictions eased after the first conscription debate in 1917. Although Allen’s achievements in cricket and rifle shooting gained him recognition and Cooper’s sporting talents were first revealed in swimming, it was the introduction of football that provided the stage for both of them to excel and radically transform race politics in Darwin sport.

**Football and Social Memory**

Australian football was played in South Australia from the 1860s and because the majority of the Northern Territory colonial era population came from there it was well known in Darwin prior to 1916, although there is no record of competitive

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67 J T Beckett, ‘Report On Aboriginals’, Northern Territory of Australia, Report of the Administrator for the Year 1914-15, CPP 240/1915, Melbourne, November, 1915, 28. This appears to refer to Willie Allen who was a member of the Darwin Rifle Club and Cable Guard at the time as indicated by his AIF Attestation Paper, 50246 (3035344).’

games. The first mention of a football in Palmerston was in 1888. ‘We hardly think that any attempt will be made to form a football club here in this warm little spot.’ Nevertheless, from the 1890s many of Darwin’s athletic carnivals included a ‘football kicking’ event, while fancy dress balls often featured ‘footballers.’ In 1913, there was an attempt to form a junior football club but there is no record of games. The Pine Creek Workers Amusement club advertised a ‘Grand Fancy Dress Football Match’ on 8 August 1914 and although no subsequent report of the match was found, oral history testimony indicates that the game may have been played.

On 30 January 1916, the Red Cross organised Darwin’s first rugby union match and its success prompted Australian football supporters to follow suit. A Red Cross committee, made up largely of civil servants, was formed to organise a series of

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69 The North Australian, 30 June 1888.
70 Northern Territory Times, 22 May 1913.
71 Northern Territory Times, 6 August 1914. See Kath Mahony, Oral history interview by Ronda Jamieson, NTRS 226, TS 446, NTAS, Darwin, 1982, 19.
games.\textsuperscript{72} The first game was on the 12 February 1916, the second game was not reported but the third, on 25 February 1916, included Willie Allen.\textsuperscript{73} Cooper’s first game was on 4 March 1916.\textsuperscript{74} Interestingly, the most detailed report of these early games is found in The Winners, a Melbourne sports newspaper, which noted that ‘the introduction of football here [Darwin] will do much to discredit the theory that White Australia cannot develop in the Northern Territory’.\textsuperscript{75} The games, it was observed, were

\begin{quote}
the most representative football ever played … all the states were represented, while among the players were several coloured men.
The audience was the limit, Australian, Britain, France, Russia, Japan, China, Greece, Malaya, Java and almost every other nationality … about 200 members of the Abo tribes turned up to see the “Big White-feller coroboree;” and judging by their antics, it was the funniest sight they had seen for a long time.\textsuperscript{76}
\end{quote}

Unlike The Times reports that do not refer to the racial make up of teams, The Winners made a direct reference to several ‘coloured’ players. It also indicated that although Blacks were excluded as participants they made up a significant proportion of the crowd and were active and enthusiastic spectators. The local match reports of these early games were incomplete and teams were formed on an ad hoc basis. The sequence of events outlined indicates that the Red Cross organised the games and although Cooper is often credited with being the first Aborigine to play football in Darwin, the evidence is strong that this is an accolade that must be shared with Allen. In addition, Cooper and Allen were not the only Coloured players to play in this first series of football games.

\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., 10 February 1916.
\textsuperscript{73} Ibid., 2 March 1916.
\textsuperscript{74} Ibid., 16 March 1916.
\textsuperscript{75} The Winners, 10 May 1916.
\textsuperscript{76} Ibid., 10 May 1916.
The strong, persistent and consistent oral history claim that Cooper was not only the first Aboriginal football player in Darwin but the originator of football is maintained by narrative physics. ‘Our oral history tells us that a guy called Reuben Cooper introduced the game to countrymen when he was working as a buffalo shooter in Arnhemland, east of Darwin.’77 ‘He [Cooper] came back [from Adelaide] with a football and no-one knew about the thing what was, then he created, originated, Aussie Rules in the Northern Territory.’78 Further, it is claimed that Cooper not only brought the first football to Darwin, he also brought the first rulebook.79

Social memory has its own dynamic and cannot be easily judged. Nathan contends that it is ‘always selective and fragmentary, provisional and incomplete, socially constructed and anchored in the present’.80 The claim that Cooper was the originator of football in Darwin is a claim of ‘ownership’ of football. At different times, this means that it supports the ‘ownership’ of football by Darwin’s Black, Coloured

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77 Paul Roberts and Des Kootji Raymond, Buffalo Legends (Australia: Ronin Films, 1997).
78 Ibid. [Ron Cooper senior, son of Reuben Cooper speaking].
79 Gabriel Hazelbane, personal communication with the author, 7 November 2007.
80 Nathan, Saying It’s So, 61.
and/or ‘local’ community. Osmond explores sporting creation myths in detail in his thesis ‘Nimble Savages’. Darwin’s social memory of Cooper’s ‘creation’ of Darwin football conforms to the pattern of a young, gifted, innocent male introducing, inspiring or innovating a new sport or changing the direction of sport history. What is not clear is how, or why, Darwin’s social memory has denied others their recognition.

Joe Spain also played in the first series of games, making him Darwin’s first footballer of Filipino descent and first in a long line of Darwin footballers of South East Asian or Chinese ancestry. Spain, the son of Antonio and Elizabeth Spain, was born in 1901, the tenth of twelve children. The Spain family’s involvement in sport is discussed in Chapter 5. Joe’s sporting career parallels that of Reuben Cooper in that it commenced in earnest in 1915 when he participated in athletics, swimming and cycling. Joe’s inclusion in the first football games at the age of fifteen was recognition of both his sporting prowess and his family’s reputation. He continued playing football until the early 1920s and, similarly to Allen and Cooper, was a trailblazer for non-White athletes. Like Willie Allen, Spain’s contribution to sport and football is not recognised in Darwin’s social memory.

During the ‘Dry’ season, Cooper participated in athletics, swimming and cycling. He combined work with football at times by taking on the role of roving football ambassador, which supports the social memory in his role in introducing football to countrymen. He introduced football to the Oenpelli region of Arnhem Land, where he was engaged in the family buffalo shooting business in late 1917.

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81 Osmond, ‘Nimble Savages’, 82.
82 Northern Territory Times, 16 March 1916. Spain was selected in the combined South Australian / Western Australian team to play ‘The Rest’.
83 Ibid., 7 January 1915 (Athletics), 8 March 1915 (Cycling), 21 October 1915 (Swimming).
84 Ibid., 16 April 1935. Bob Murray wrote in a letter to the editor that ‘Waratahs claim to have always been an all white team is not correct. I remember when they have had three of the finest coloured players in Darwin in their team (R. Cooper, Joe Spain and Willie Allen).’ Spain and Allen do not appear in any of the hundred or more oral histories in the NTAS collection that discuss football in Darwin. Nor are they mentioned in Lee and Barfoot, NTFL.
85 Northern Territory Times, 22 June 1916.
R.J. Cooper, Jun, now of Alligator Head, near the Wildman River, and lately captain of southern football team, is training up a hefty band of darkies in the popular sport for the first time in the history of Australian aboriginality, and will be prepared to throw out a challenge to play any other N.T. team, whether white, yellow, brindle or strawberry.  

The Northern Territory Football League (NTFL) was established in January 1917. The first game, on 27 January, was between Waratahs and Wanderers. A photograph of the ‘first’ Waratahs team, taken on the day, and the match report confirms that Willie Allen was one of the players. A week later there was an exhibition game on the town oval between the Larrakia and Wagait, as part of Foundation Day celebrations. This game proved to be a rare occurrence and gave a glimpse into the

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86 Ibid., 26 October 1916.
88 Northern Territory Times, 1 February 1917.
89 Ibid. Wagait is the Aboriginal group that neighbour Larrakia land to the South West.
tightly controlled lives of Aborigines who lived in Kahlin compound. Robert ‘Bob’ MacDonald was a keen footballer and he would play a significant role in the game until the 1930s. Despite his enthusiasm for the game in his role as Superintendent of the Kahlin compound, he did not generally permit the ‘inmates’ to play football outside its confines. His control of Kahlin was often brutal. ‘He [MacDonald] used to walk around with a stockwhip around his neck, and if they [Aborigines] didn’t do what they were told, they got a crack with the whip.’ Key members of Government officials controlled all aspects of Black daily life, including their leisure. The list of best players serves not only as a record of some of the earliest Aboriginal footballers in Darwin to join Willie Allen and Reuben Cooper but also as a symbol of the regime under which they lived; typically, it fails to clearly identify players by refusing to provide their full names. ‘The best players - for Larrakeyah [sic] were: Charlie, George, Darwin, Robert and Don, whilst for Worgites [sic] ; Nilko, Micky, George II, Dashwood and Jimmy were conspicuous.’

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90 James Watt, Oral history interview by Margaret Kowald, NTRS 226, TS 605, NTAS, Darwin, 1984, Tape 1, 14.
91 Northern Territory Times, 1 February 1917. Kahlin compound was an important nursery for football in Darwin and many Aborigines from Darwin and outlying communities learnt the game there. Unfortunately, this is one of the only records of football in the compound although oral histories confirm games were often played there.
Cooper ‘was a veritable tower of strength’\textsuperscript{92} in his first game for Waratahs on 3 March, and although he appeared in two further match reports this is no indication of how many he may have played in 1917. Willie Allen played one match in 1917 before enlisting in the AIF in December and serving in Egypt and Palestine. At the public farewell to the volunteer contingent, Allen was acknowledged as one of ‘three lads born here [Northern Territory]’\textsuperscript{93}. Allen returned to Darwin in 1919, but he only stayed briefly before leaving for Brisbane for his second marriage to Madeline Ferguson, an Aboriginal woman from western Queensland.\textsuperscript{94} He lived in the Cairns area until his death in 1959, which may explain why his role in the foundation of football in Darwin has faded.\textsuperscript{95} It is an anomaly that Allen and Cooper played for

\textsuperscript{92} Northern Territory Times, 8 March 1917.
\textsuperscript{93} Ibid., 20 December 1917. Eddie Barnett and Robert Shepard were the other two. Shepard was also of Aboriginal descent.
\textsuperscript{94} Attestation Paper of Willie Allen, 50246 (3035344). See also, Cliff Little, personal communication with the author, 8 August 2007.
Waratahs in their first season. Waratahs was characteristically identified as a Silvertail stronghold; some of the Waratahs were the very same public servants who administered the Aboriginals Ordinance. Vasili argues that Britain’s first Black footballer in the nineteenth century, Arthur Wharton, lived in ‘co-existing worlds; in [football] they were acclaimed and accepted as one of us; [off the field] they were racialised and categorised as an ‘Other’.96 Allen had managed this dialectical contradiction for over a decade and it now confronted a new generation of Coloured sportsmen in Cooper and Spain. They all lived in ‘co-existing worlds’ but their off-field social status in the first years of the NTFL was ambiguous and fluid. While their sporting experience was undeniable, there is little evidence to shed light on their acceptance or otherwise by White society. Like Allen before them, Cooper and Spain must also have displayed the necessary social fluidity to be accepted by predominately White football teams.97

To co-exist in the multiple worlds of Territory society, Coloured sportsmen had to devise a multifaceted identity to participate in sport. At a time when Aborigines were characterised contrastingly as primitive savages or childlike, and those of mixed descent were considered ‘morally worthless’,98 it required considerable social dexterity to be accepted as a ‘sportsman’. Allen, Cooper and Spain were able to manage and negotiate this racial paradox to become a ‘symbol of possibility’ to the non-White community.99 The most likely explanation for Allen and Cooper’s inclusion in the Waratahs team was their exceptional sporting ability, allied to their social status achieved through their family and social connections. This acceptance, conditional as it was, was short-lived.

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96 Vasili, The First Black Footballer, 203.
97 Wiggins, Glory Bound, 203.
99 Hoberman, Darwin’s Athletes, 123.
The short 1918 football season from January to March 1918 saw ‘Vesteys’ football club replace ‘Warriors’ as the third team in the NTFL. Cooper did not feature in the reports of any games during the season which may support claims that he was sacked from Waratahs on racial grounds. There is no documentary evidence to substantiate this. There was widespread swapping and changing of players from team to team in the initial years of the football competition because the workforce itself was transient. Distinct teams were a new phenomenon in Darwin but they had not yet developed the fixed identities they would assume in the following years. The flux in team membership was a further illustration of the fracturing and recasting of Darwin society along emerging social boundaries and allegiances. Without discounting racial prejudice as a motive to change of clubs, there are other possibilities. It is doubtful that Reuben would have considered himself a Silvertail, given his experience as a buffalo hunter, which was a better match with Vesteys, a meatworks factory team. It

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100 Evidence does not support claims that Warriors changed their name to Vesteys. Only two Warriors players from the previous season played for Vesteys in 1918. There were in fact more former Waratahs players than Warriors in the Vesteys teams of 1918. See Stephen, ‘Northern Territory Sport and Leisure Data Base’, 2007.
is also possible that he made a strategic decision to strengthen the family allegiance with Vesteys to position them for future business related to their extensive pastoral leases on the Adelaide River and Coburg peninsula.\textsuperscript{101} It is also possible that as one of the league’s most talented players he received some financial inducement to transfer to Vesteys, a practice that had begun the previous season.\textsuperscript{102} Regardless of his reason for changing teams, Cooper re-emerged during the 1918–19 football season. It was the first NTFL season to span the ‘Wet’, from December to March, and to have a finals series, won by Wanderers. During the season, Cooper became the first Aborigine appointed to a sports committee,\textsuperscript{103} and the first to captain a Darwin sports team — Vesteys.\textsuperscript{104}

**Sport and Rebellion**

December 1918 was also a period of great social and political unrest in Darwin, culminating in the Darwin Rebellion. The union movement, under the leadership of Harold Nelson, agitated against Gilruth’s administration for many months. Nelson, targeted Gilruth as the cause of the Territory’s maladministration, but wages at Vesteys, the conscription debate and even a beer boycott of Darwin hotels were all issues that increased tensions to boiling point.\textsuperscript{105} After a series of public meetings, union members finally confronted Gilruth at Government House on 17 December, where they demanded he leave the Territory and an investigation into his administration be held. Gilruth stared them down, but he did leave Darwin, never to return, in February 1919. As important as the Darwin Rebellion is in Northern Territory history, the town’s sporting calendar was not disrupted, perhaps indicating where the priorities really lay. The day before, on 16 December, a sports day

\textsuperscript{101} Frawley, ‘Peoplegotagun’, 63. Reuben opened a butcher business in Darwin in 1922. See *Northern Territory Times*, 6 October 1922.
\textsuperscript{102} *Northern Territory Times*, 29 March 1917.
\textsuperscript{103} Ibid., 7 December 1918.
\textsuperscript{104} Ibid., 4 January 1919.
\textsuperscript{105} Donovan, *The Other End of Australia*, 43.
celebrating Armistice Day was held, and the football competition continued despite the political demonstrations throughout the week.

Plate 42: Vestey's Football Club c1918. [Joe Spain standing, third from right. Reuben Cooper is sitting with the football]. (Unknown, E D W S Donnison Collection, SL NSW, MLMSS 890/3 0230)

In the aftermath of World War I and the conclusion of the first decade of Commonwealth rule, sport in the Northern Territory was radically altered — but full of contradictions. The Silvertails ceded control of sport to the unions but racist segregation prevailed. Amidst the fervour for a White Australia, Blacks in sport were routinely and pejoratively referred to as ‘niggers’, ‘descendants of Ham’, and ‘Coons’. Yet paradoxically, Reuben Cooper was the Northern Territory’s acknowledged champion. Despite his success, after Willie Allen’s departure in

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106 Northern Territory Times, 21 December, 1918
107 Football games were held on 14 and 22 of December.
108 Ibid., 13 September 1919.
109 Ibid., 27 September 1919.
110 Ibid., 3 November 1919. Northern Territory swimming champion; Northern Territory Times, 15 February 1919. In one athletics carnival, Cooper ran a 100 yards in a time of 9.45 seconds, an
1917, Cooper remained the only Aborigine and Joe Spain the only player of Asian descent playing NTFL football in Darwin. They were rare symbols of possibility for non-White sportsmen.

In late 1919, a Royal Commission, presided over by Justice Ewing, investigated the events that led to the ‘Darwin Rebellion’. Although his final report was described as an embarrassment and a farce, Ewing made some interesting observations about Darwin society. He noted that a common perception of Darwin was that it was ‘composed largely of Bolshevists,’ and ‘considering the mixed population, I am astonished that there have not been very much more serious happenings than up to the present have taken place.’ These two factors — the influence of radical unions and Darwin’s multi-racial community — would coalesce to transform the town’s social, political and sporting landscape in the interwar period. Football became a symbol and vehicle for a new collective consciousness and identity that, in addition to individual character, would determine who played. Race in football would become an issue as never before.

extraordinary time for any era; Northern Territory Times, 22 March 1919. Hec Hogan, set the Australian and World record for this event at 9.3 seconds on 13 March 1954.

111 He was joined by William ‘Putt’ Ah Mat, in November 1919, Northern Territory Times, 22 November 1919.

112 Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 43.

113 Ewing, Report on Northern Territory Administration, CPP 28/1920, 3

114 Ibid., 8
Chapter 7: Contested Space and Identities: Australian Football in Darwin, 1920–1939

Oh, we played football, ... But football those days, was different football to what it is now. ... we played with a vengeance because it was the black man against the white man. It was war when we got on the field.¹

Sport, Conflict and Narrative Physics

In Saying It's So, Daniel Nathan examines the continuing grip that the 1919 major league baseball world series and the Black Sox scandal holds on the American psyche. For Australians, the equivalent would be cricket’s 1932–3 ‘bodyline series’. In Darwin, the 1926–29 football colour bar was arguably the most controversial and enduring episode in its sporting history. Yet it is not well documented nor is its significance fully understood. Perhaps more than any other episode in the social memory of Darwin’s football, it has been subject to narrative physics. Consequently, the intensity and complexity of race relations during this period, and the pivotal role football played in forging Darwin’s community identity, have not been revealed. The North Australian Football League colour bar substantiates MacClancy’s contention that ‘where the state and civil society are in profound conflict the cultural domain of sport becomes increasingly politicized, control of which is hotly contested’.²

Certainly, Darwin was subject to profound social and economic conflict between 1920 to 1939. A significant change was the emergence of a growing and assertive Coloured community, which began to resist and challenge the injustices of the Aboriginals Ordinance. For the first time, Coloured footballers became the majority in some of Darwin’s football teams and dominated on the playing field. In doing so,

¹ Val McGinness, Oral history interview, Tape 2, 9.
² MacClancy, Sport, Identity and Ethnicity, 11.
they demonstrated that despite the forces arrayed against them, their perseverance and talent overcame.

Greg Denning argues that history is not the past, but a consciousness of the past used for present purposes. From 1920, oral histories become important for Northern Territory historians. Louise White agrees with Denning on the use of history for present purposes and because of this, accuracy is not the primary concern of oral histories.

This is not to say that people deliberately tell false stories. The distinction between true and false stories may be an important one for historians, but for people engaged in contentious arguments, explanations, and descriptions, sometimes presenting themselves as experts, or just the best possible light, it may not matter: people want to tell stories that work, stories that convey ideas and points.

Darwin’s football social memory of 1920 to 1939 is a story of talent, racism, identity and character in the face of adversity. Above all, it is a story of the struggle for human rights. As deeply embedded in the social memory as this story is, it must be tested to ensure that omissions do not deny its full complexity.

Vesteys meatworks closed in 1920, unemployment was widespread and the economy languished throughout the decade. The Great Depression came early to Darwin. The closure prompted a rapid decline in the White population to 850 by 1921. The union militancy that had resulted in the Darwin Rebellion in 1918 led the Home and Territories Minister Bamford to advise that ‘a strong hand and a big boot’ were required to seize the administrative initiative in the Territory. Under the

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5 See Figure 4, page 197.

Aboriginals Ordinance 1918, controls on Aborigines were tightened and applied to all aspects of their lives. Aborigines were not paid directly by employers but their wages were placed in a special fund, forcing individuals to apply for permission to withdraw their own money. Val McGinness, a prominent Vesteys footballer, recalls the frustrations of the demeaning system.

So this day, look I was really mad at this system that they had. And I went up to them and: 'Yes, Val. How much money do you want?'

'Oh' I said: 'I'd like to have five pounds please Mr Partridge' - that was big money you know, five pounds. 'What?' five pounds is it? What are you going to do with five pounds?' It had absolutely nothing to do with him, you see. I said: 'Oh, I've got to pay for my lessons Mr Partridge.' 'Lessons? What sort of lessons are you taking?' I said: 'I'm learning to mind my own business, Mr Partridge.' … Oh, my goodness, I reckon I was real cheeky there.7

Partridge was also a Waratahs Football Club official. His attitudes towards those under his ‘care’ were made clear during a 1921 Northern Territory Football League meeting. ‘George May [a Larrakia man living in Kahlin compound] applied for registration for Wanderers. Mr Partridge said that anybody at the compound should be classed as a nigger and not allowed to play at all.’8

Although the evidence is fragmentary, it is clear that football was very popular and played regularly within Kahlin, despite the exclusion of Black players from the NTFL.

7 Val McGinness, Oral history interview, Tape 1, 12.
8 Northern Territory Times, 10 March 1921.
A football competition at the abo compound was advanced another stage on Sunday when the Larrakeyah [sic] (Reds) beat the Woggites [sic] (Yellow) by 8 goals 5 behinds to 7 goals 5 behinds. The compound now have three pretty good teams, Larrakeyah [sic], Woggites [sic], and Darwin, and a combination of the three is anxious to meet white teams on the oval.\(^9\)

The fact that Kahlin could sustain the same number of football teams as the town, when the compound population at this time was approximately 400, is testament to the game’s popularity.\(^10\) Nevertheless, Black players and teams were restricted to occasional exhibition games on the town oval until after World War II.\(^11\) Partridge’s comments about George May, whom he ‘classed as a nigger’, reveal the extent Aboriginal peoples lives were controlled and the arbitrary bureaucratic power officials wielding in ‘classifying’ people according to ‘colour’. Despite his vitriol, Partridge was overruled by the argument that ‘Waratahs have had men of similar standing’ implying that May was of mixed descent and therefore ‘acceptable’ to the NTFL.\(^12\) The racial dynamics of Darwin were becoming increasingly complex.

\(^9\) Ibid., 11 January 1921.


\(^11\) Northern Territory Times, 6 January 1921. Exhibitions like this New Year’s Day game occurred on public holidays.

\(^12\) Ibid., 10 March 1921.
Old Foes and New Allegiances

Although the impact of Government attempts to segregate Darwin society in the 1920s was considerable, it was the preoccupation of a small minority. Contrary to Government policy, a multiracial community began to emerge based upon a complex network of local Coloured families allied to a segment of the White working class. Many of the multiracial community refused to conform and coalesced into an identifiable and formidable social force. Cross-cultural and class allegiances were complex and issues of race and class continually intersected and collided. Darwin society was full of contradictions: rarely were issues as simple as Black and White.

Henry Lee, a White man brought up by a Chinese family, recalled Darwin society in the 1920s and 30s as ‘all mixed. All used to get on well together, everybody knows one another, you know. But the only part where they can’t mix up was the higher part … that’s where you get up to the administration part.’ Eileen Fitzer, a White retail worker in the 1920s, believed ‘Oh, there were two groups really … the workmen and the upper class.’ Despite the restrictions imposed by the Aboriginals

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13 Martinez, Mixed Relations, 132.
Ordinance, many of the Coloured community lived beyond the confines of Kahlin compound. Their economic independence gave them relative freedom. The successful Vesteys teams of the 1920s, which began to dominate the NTFL, drew many of their players from this community.

Plate 44: [Vesteys premiership team, 1921–22. Back row L-R: George Wedd, Jack McGinness, Bill Nuttall, Roy Green, Bob Anthony, George Tindall, Kevin Dempsey; Middle row L-R: Horace Nelson, ‘Fatty’ Harris, Reuben Cooper (Capt.), Harry Hazelbane, Alec Barnett; Front row L-R: ‘Tassie’ Graham, William ‘Put’ Ah Mat, Duncan Presley, Ponce Cubillo]. (Unknown, NTG Photographer Collection, NTL, PH0136_0096)

In the 1921–22 NTFL season, Vesteys broke through for its first premiership under the captaincy of Cooper, who also won the League’s best and fairest award. Vesteys’ victory was very popular.

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17 Northern Territory Times, 6 October 1922. Cooper was amongst the first Aboriginals to own and operate his own business, a butchery in Darwin.
All good sports are pleased to see a young team (mostly composed of boys born and bred in the Territory) come into their own at last. They have always played a fast clean game and the game they put up last Saturday was no exception to the rule.\textsuperscript{18}

Cooper was Darwin’s best known sportsman. ‘Reuben Cooper, gosh! He was educated. He was a half-caste: greatest athlete that's ever been to Darwin even today.’\textsuperscript{19} Other players in Vesteys first premiership who would become synonymous with Darwin’s multicultural sporting community included McGinness, Cubillo, Ah Mat and Hazelbane, who with many others would challenge the White stranglehold on Darwin sports. Up until this time Cooper, Allen and Spain had entered White sport as individuals who ‘fitted in’. As more talented Coloured players joined Vesteys, a collective consciousness developed. This new and unified force changed the power dynamics of Darwin sport by offering Coloured players a genuine choice. White teams could no longer determine who did, or did not play, according to their own capricious ‘standards’. Coloured players asserted their independence by choosing to play in their own team. By 1926, Vesteys teams comprised of a majority of Coloured or Chinese players.\textsuperscript{20} Under Cooper’s leadership, Vesteys games became a rallying point for the Coloured community providing a public stage to take on the Silvertails on the field as well as giving their supporters a rare forum to berate them. Between 1920 and 1926 they would play in four grand finals, winning three.\textsuperscript{21}

Vesteys’ evolution from a factory team to a local Coloured team was not the only indication that Darwin sport was experiencing a period of transformation. The Chinese also embraced football and became involved in White sports as never before. The first Chinese to play Darwin football may have been Chan, who played

\textsuperscript{18} The Northern Standard, 21 February 1922.
\textsuperscript{19} Fitzer, Eileen, Oral history interview, 40–41.
\textsuperscript{20} Northern Territory Times, 26 November 1926. Just prior to the colour bar in 1926 the Vesteys team included; J McGinness, B McGinness, Ah Kee, J Lee, H Hazelbane, P [Put] Ah Mat, A Ah Mat, E Cubillo, B Damaso, H. Jan, T. Moo.
\textsuperscript{21} Lee, and Barfoot. NTFL, 52.
for Wanderers in 1922.\textsuperscript{22} In 1923, it was reported that the ‘tailors’ had defeated ‘the rest of Darwin’ in an all-Chinese football game umpired by Tick Johnson, a Coloured man.\textsuperscript{23} Although the game was only considered an ‘amusement’, similar to Chinese sporting participation during the South Australian administration, it was an early example of the cooperation between the Chinese and Coloured communities which would become a feature of Darwin sport in later years. In December, the Chinese began soccer games within their own community.\textsuperscript{24} The most important initiative was the establishment of the Darwin Chinese Recreation Club (DCRC), at premises in Cavenagh Street.\textsuperscript{25} At the official opening it was announced that the Club would ‘encourage boxing, football (Australian rules), tennis, swimming and soccer’ and intended to field teams in all these sports.\textsuperscript{26} The DCRC was the first non-White sporting club formed in Darwin and became a driving force in sport, particularly after World War II. The emergence of Vesteys as a force on the football field and the formation of the DCRC were unprecedented challenges to White sporting dominance. One consequence of this realignment of sporting power was that issues of ‘Colour’ increasingly became a matter of divisive public comment and debate.

‘Colour’ was rarely mentioned in football reports up until 1922; but from this time onwards, the public commentary on issues of ‘colour’ and ‘the half-caste problem’\textsuperscript{27} became almost continuous. This is not to say that racism was not prevalent; to the contrary, Darwin society continued to be defined by race. Vesteys rise to prominence in the period 1920 to 1926 occurred during a period when Darwin was stricken by social and political tensions. The early onset of the Depression, the continuous

\textsuperscript{22} Northern Standard, 20 January 1922.
\textsuperscript{23} Northern Territory Times, 9 January 1923. The first all Chinese football game was held on the Ballarat gold-fields in 1892. See, Hess, et. al, National Game, 126.
\textsuperscript{24} Ibid., 4 December 1923.
\textsuperscript{25} Northern Territory Times, 11 December 1923.
\textsuperscript{26} Ibid., 28 December 1923.
\textsuperscript{27} Northern Territory, Report of the Administrator for the Year Ended 30th June, 1923, CPP 71/1924, 7.
animosity and mistrust between the unions and the Commonwealth, exacerbated by a schism within the union movement, was underpinned by a deeply ingrained racism resulting in a ‘hothouse’ social atmosphere prone to acrimony and susceptible to explosion.

**Union Strife**

Between 1922 and 1927 there was a continuous and acrimonious battle in Darwin for dominance within the union movement between the North Australian Industrial Union (NAIU) and the Northern Territory Workers Union (NTWU). A full account of the rivalry is in Bernie Brian’s ‘The Northern Territory’s One Big Union’. This struggle was reflected in Darwin’s football history where the social tensions, often based on issues of race and Coloured labour, were contested on the town’s oval. In June 1922, the NAIU accused the NTWU of using Greek and Coloured strike-breakers. The racial intolerance that always lurked just below the surface in Darwin was unleashed, ostensibly to protect the White Australia policy, but in reality to protect union salaries. Despite the inherent racism that underpinned union rhetoric, and the continuing opposition of both unions to Black labour, the industrial tensions and continuing unemployment drew some Coloured workers to the union cause.

The announcement of the northern railways extension from Katherine to Daly Waters in 1924, and the recommencement of work at Vesteys meatworks for one season in 1925, bought a brief respite from unemployment for some but it also acted as a catalyst to increase industrial pressure by the government on the unions. Finally, the unions were forced to collaborate in strike action in July 1926, which prompted calls

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28 The NAIU, was an offshoot of the AWU, launched in mid 1921. The NTWU, formed in early 1922, was made up of disaffected NAIU members who wanted the restoration of the AWU.
29 Bernie Brian, ‘One Big Union.’
30 Ibid., 91.
31 Ibid., 96. It was during this period that references to ‘Colour’ in football reports became more prominent.
for amalgamation in November, resulting in the establishment of the North Australian Workers Union (NAWU) in April 1927.

The strident exclusion of Blacks in the NAWU constitution continued but it did allow the membership of ‘half-castes’. Membership was further amended in August 1928 to include 'any coloured person born in Australia who has passed a 3rd class school examination of State school standard'. In 1929, conditions had deteriorated for many unemployed workers in Darwin, who began a series of protests against the denial of rations and the withdrawal of relief work by occupying the verandah of Darwin’s government offices. These protests included many of Darwin’s Coloured community, including Joe McGinness, a prominent unionist and Vestey’s footballer. By the 1930s, union membership amongst Darwin’s Coloured community was common. The struggle for union power and the gradual removal of discriminatory union membership allowing for increased participation of Coloured workers in the 1930s was reflected in a parallel battle for rights on the football field.

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32 Ibid., 101.
33 Martinez, ‘Plural Australia’, 112.
34 Ibid., 114.
35 Verandah occupations occurred in January, August and November 1929. April 1930 and January 1931.
37 Martinez, ‘Plural Australia’, 208.
38 Martinez, Mixed Relations, 136. Refers to NAWU.
‘Breeding the Colour Out’

During the period 1921 to 1933 the ‘half-caste’ population of Darwin grew from 83 (6 per cent of the population) to 223 (14 per cent).\(^{39}\) This increase fed the racist paranoia of many Whites who feared that the town was in danger of being overrun by ‘others’. In 1925 and 1926, White parents of children at the Darwin State School petitioned the federal government to separate Coloured and White children, a phenomenon already in practice in New South Wales schools from the turn of the century.\(^ {40}\) This fear supported and sanctioned the institutional racism that underpinned Darwin society. The administration of this system came under review in the latter half of 1928 when J W Bleakley completed his report, *The Aboriginals and Half-Castes of Central Australia and North Australia*. He identified miscegenation as an ‘evil’\(^ {41}\) although Aborigines and ‘half-castes’ were also acknowledged as an

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\(^{40}\) Martinez, ‘Ethnic Policy and Practice in Darwin,’ 133.

essential source of cheap labour.\textsuperscript{42} For the ‘inmates’ of Kahlin Compound, he noted, it would be good for them to play the occasional game of football with White teams as it may ‘cultivate better understanding and feelings towards them by the whites, many of whom will not allow that they are any better than marsupials’.\textsuperscript{43} Segregation and discrimination became more pronounced under the regime of Dr. Cecil Cook, Chief Protector of Aborigines and Chief Medical Officer between 1927 and 1939. Although Cook was considered an expert in Aboriginal affairs, his theories, Austin notes, ‘took him to the fringe of the eugenics movement’ and, arguably, beyond.\textsuperscript{44} Cook took measures to ‘facilitate control of immorality’\textsuperscript{45} due to the increasing Coloured population which he considered a ‘matter of social and economic urgency’.\textsuperscript{46} His ‘crushing paternalism’ justified the removal of Aboriginal children from their parents at increasing rates.\textsuperscript{47} He required Aborigines in Darwin to be fingerprinted and undergo compulsory medical inspections. They were also issued with a bronze numbered disc used to maintain detailed government records and which had to be shown on admission to the pictures and making withdrawals from their own trust fund.\textsuperscript{48} In his attempts to ameliorate the ‘half-caste problem’, the Commonwealth gave him an almost free hand to implement a policy of social engineering to ‘breed the colour out’\textsuperscript{49} by encouraging White men to marry Coloured women. This policy was clearly based on eugenics.

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\textsuperscript{42} Ibid., 12.
\textsuperscript{43} Ibid., 14. It was also suggested that cricket, tennis, boating and swimming were suitable outdoor sports for the inmates of Kahlin.
\textsuperscript{44} Austin, \textit{Never Trust a Government Man}, 22.
\textsuperscript{45} Northern Territory, Report of the Administrator for the Year Ended 30\textsuperscript{th} June, 1931, CPP 14/1932, Canberra, 1932, 6.
\textsuperscript{46} Northern Territory, Report of the Administrator for the Year Ended 30\textsuperscript{th} June, 1932, CPP 124/1933, Canberra, 1933, 8.
\textsuperscript{47} Austin, \textit{Never Trust a Government Man}, 195.
\textsuperscript{48} Markus, \textit{Governing Savages} (North Sydney: Allen and Unwin, 1990), 100.
\textsuperscript{49} The Northern Standard, 9 June 1933.
\end{flushleft}
In the Northern Territory the mating of an Aboriginal with any person other than an Aboriginal is prohibited. The mating of coloured aliens with any female of part Aboriginal blood is also forbidden. Every endeavour is being made to breed out the colour by elevating female half-castes to the white standard with a view to their absorption by mating into the white population.50

Tatz makes a compelling argument that Cook was deeply imbued with eugenicists’ motives and in association with Bleakley and A O Neville, Chief Protector of Aborigines in Western Australia, 1915 to 1940, who shared his views, dominated the development of Aboriginal policy until World War II.51 As part of a State and Commonwealth administrators’ meeting in Canberra to discuss federal control of Aborigines, they recommended an overarching policy in 1937, in which they concluded that the ‘the destiny of the natives of Aboriginal origin, but not of full blood, lies in their ultimate absorption by the Commonwealth’.52 Cook’s belief that ‘absorption’ was in the best interests of ‘half-castes’53 was not shared by many of the Darwin community.

50 Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for the Year Ended 30th June, 1933, CPP 203/1934, Canberra, 1934, 7.
51 Tatz, With Intent to Destroy, 91.
52 Ibid.
A Harmonious Multiracial Community?

A society based upon institutional racism provided a grim backdrop to race relations in Darwin from 1927 to 1939, yet surprisingly one feature of the oral testimony about ‘Old Darwin’ in the 1920s and 1930s is that it is recalled proudly as a harmonious multiracial community.

I have a very good recollection of what Darwin was like in the old days. Darwin was mostly a real cosmopolitan sort of town with a mixture of — there were more Chinese, Japanese, Greeks, and Malay people — outside the Aboriginal people — that lived here all their lives now. … it was only a small little town then, you know, and they found, it was a very — a place that you could live in, you know, everybody here was equal to one another and no-one, you know, ever thought bad of anyone.\(^5^4\)

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\(^5^4\) Gabriel Hazelbane, Oral history interview by Matthew Stephen, NTRS 226, TS 1175, NTAS, Darwin, 2006, 2.
Darwin’s Coloured community acted as a ‘connecting hub between supposedly separate ethnic groups’. The most publicly contested site, the location where the multiracial community identity was forged and racial stereotypes continually challenged, was Darwin Oval and Australian football.

The oval and the sports played there offered a transformative space where the barriers and segregation of society, while not eliminated, were temporarily suspended. It brought the community together in a shared space like no other activity. It was not limited to the players and the ground but embraced the spectators and its surrounds. ‘Oh my goodness, there'd be black, white and brindle there … it was a very, very popular game and everyone seemed to see football and watch it. It was really wonderful really.’ The temporary suspension of social norms at the football ground allowed overt racism to be publicly articulated. ‘On the Darwin oval, [laughs] where the Aboriginals cheered the umpire. The coloured people cheered the Buffaloes, and the white people cheered the white people. It was racial conflict every Saturday.’

Often the most vociferous racist spectators, contradicting their conventional social position, were women. ‘I am sorry to say that the question of ‘colour’ was impressively announced among some of the onlookers, and more especially by the female sex.’ The oval and the relaxation of social mores was only possible in the contested space created by an afternoon at the football. Stephenson has argued that the creative arts offered a counter-narrative that exposed gaps and challenged the dominant Black–White narrative and provided alternative models of coexistence between different and sometimes divided social groups. These counter-narratives played an important role in the process of ‘detoxifying’ Australian cultural

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55 Martinez, ‘Ethnic Policy and Practice in Darwin, p. 32.
56 Fitzer, Oral history interview, 47.
57 Robert G Steele, Oral history interview by Helen Wilson, NTRS 226, TS 77, NTAS, Darwin, 1982, Tape 1, 2.
58 Northern Territory Times, 20 February 1923.
relations. In Darwin, football was the counter-narrative. As the archetypal Australian sporting activity, social boundaries shifted and merged because participants could both conform to and challenge stereotypes. The skills and talents of the Coloured footballers and their outspoken supporters meant that they were able to shift from the margins to the centre of public attention. The football ground and surrounds became, quite literally, a theatre, or a battleground, where emotions and creativity suppressed by a combination of oppressive institutional racism and social sanctions were unleashed.

A depressed economy, union tensions, a repressive government regime, and an increasingly assertive Coloured community provided the background for the most serious rift in Darwin’s football history. It demonstrated that if there was a sense of community it was not universal. Val McGinness described the depth of feeling at the time. ‘Oh, we played football, … But football those days, was different football to what it is now. … we played with a vengeance because it was the black man against the white man. It was war when we got on the field.’

59 Stephenson, The Outsiders Within, 163.
60 Val McGinness, Oral history interview, Tape 2, 9.
The Colour Bar and the Darwin Football League

The 1926–27 NTFL season began with suggestions that players should be compelled to register with teams along racial lines. Matters climaxed in December 1926 when a holiday football game in Darwin between a NTFL team and a Katherine team, composed largely of Vesteys players, ended in acrimony. The Katherine team walked off the ground when the players felt they were not given a ‘fair go’ by the umpire but critics saw their actions as a slur of the worst kind and ‘insulting to their white opponents, to the umpire, and in a larger sense to every white spectator round...’

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61 The players’ names provided by Kathy Mills, daughter of Jack McGinness, personal communication with the author, 19 January 2009.
62 Northern Territory Times, 21 December 1926.
63 Although there are no team lists for this game, Jack McGinness is known to have played. The construction of railway extensions resulted in many men working in the Katherine region. At least two games were played in the Katherine region around 1926. Emungalan (Katherine: Katherine Historical Society NT, n.d.), 6.
the oval’. H Edwards, Vesteys NTFL representative, provided an alternative version:

the Katherine team considered they were being held up to ridicule [by the umpire] and decided to abandon the match. … but the half-caste boys simply walked off without any demonstration except ironical cheers for the umpire and no hard feeling at all for their opponents.

In another interpretation Don Bonson, who was not present at the game but was obviously told the story, recalls the game ending in a brawl. Hartmann, describes the famous Black Power salute of Tommie Smith and John Carlos at the 1968 Olympics as a gesture ‘full of paradox and ambiguity: at once subversive and respectful, silent but resounding, seemingly empty of political content on the one hand, yet packed with meaning and significance on the other’. Similarly, the Katherine football ‘walk-off’, is deeply etched into the social memory of Darwin’s football community. The symbolic power of the ‘walk-off’ is magnified by its mythic and ‘Rashomon’-like quality sustained in the oral tradition. The significance of this spontaneous collective act, although not immediately apparent, still resonates today as a symbol of resistance to an antagonistic discriminatory regime. The game was a watershed in race relations and football in the Northern Territory.

The game was also the catalyst for increased political activism. Kathy Mills, daughter of the union activist Jack McGinness, recalled:

64 Northern Territory Times, 24 December 1926.
65 The Northern Standard, 31 December 1926. Harry Edwards was a blacksmith and boring contractor closely aligned to the McGinness family through his marriage to Margaret McGinness. Edwards often employed the McGinness brothers in his business and was also heavily involved in the union movement. Kathy Mills, personal communication with the author, 16 December 2008. See also McGinness, Son of Alyandabu, 8–11.
67 Hartmann, Race Culture, 25.
68 Rashomon is a 1950 Akira Kurosawa film. It tells the story from four different and contradictory points of view suggesting that the nature of truth is not absolute.
Dad said they weren't getting a fair go. So he walked the team off the field. That's when they were first disqualified .... And from that time on, he went on to pursue rights for Aboriginal people.⁶⁹

The Katherine walk-off resulted in the formation of the Whites only North Australian Football League. The new league replaced Vesteyes with a new team, Buffaloes, and imposed a colour bar until the 1929–30 season.⁷⁰ It is not surprising that the social memory of this turbulent time has omitted some finer details of events to capture the essence of the battle.

Plate 48: Soccer game, Darwin. Chinese Recreation Club vs unknown, c1920s.
(Unknown, HSNT Collection, NTAS, NTRS 1854, No 340)

The decision to bar the Coloured players from the League was by no means popular. Rather than demoralise and marginalise the Coloured community, it united in opposition to the Silvertails. To many, the new league represented ‘outsiders’ and support for the Coloured players often took on the form of locals versus ‘birds of passage’.⁷¹ Class was also a factor in the debate, placing the blame for the tensions

⁷⁰ Northern Territory Times, 24 December 1926. The first Buffaloes team included only two players who had played for Vestey’s previously: E S McGaffin, B Lowe/ See Northern Territory Times, 26 November 1926.
⁷¹ The Northern Standard, 31 December 1926.
on ‘Darwin’s Hobnobbing nobility’. The impact of the colour bar went beyond Australian football. The newly formed Darwin Soccer Association, which coalesced around the DCRC, applied to use the town oval for games but was refused by the town council on racial grounds, according to its secretary Tommy Ming Ket. Darwin’s Coloured football players appear to have taken their exclusion from the league in their stride and continued to participate in sport wherever the opportunity arose. Most of them, including Cooper, joined the Darwin Soccer Association and played soccer until April 1927. Martinez argues that this was ‘one of the first examples of formal Asian–Aboriginal co-operation [and] … the joint experience of discrimination prompted an increase in inter-ethnic solidarity.’ Football was the only sport where the colour bar was formally drawn. Integrated soccer, boxing and athletics continued throughout this period. The integration of these sports indicates that the football colour bar was not simply a matter of all Whites against all non-Whites, but rather an initiative driven by White ‘Silvertails’ who were themselves becoming increasingly marginalised and isolated as the Chinese, White and Coloured working class became more closely aligned.

72 Ibid., 28 January 1927.
73 Northern Territory Times, 11 January 1927.
74 The Northern Standard, 28 January 1927.
75 Martinez, ‘Ethnic Policy and Practice in Darwin,’ 138.
76 The Northern Standard, 11 March 1927 and 15 April 1927.
At the start of the 1927–28 football season, it became clear that the non-White football community would not allow the NAFL to dictate terms. On Boxing Day, Vesteys One played Vesteys Two in an exhibition game. Vesteys had enlisted many of the Chinese soccer players with whom they had played soccer earlier in the year to play Australian football, thus bolstering both their numbers and public appeal. The following week the two Vesteys teams evolved into Wanderers and Vesteys and played under the auspices of the newly-established Darwin Football League under the secretaryship of Reuben Cooper. A number of junior football games were also organised, pitting an Australian team against the Chinese Junior Football Club. At the end of the season, the Darwin Football League issued a challenge to the NAFL premiers Magpies. The offer was refused. Although snubbed by White clubs, the Vesty’s players remained defiant. A club chant from the period indicates that they proudly challenged the White clubs and rebelled against unjust laws.

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77 Ibid., 23 December 1927.
78 On the evidence available, it is difficult to ascertain if any White players joined the Darwin Football League, but if so they were a very small minority.
80 The Northern Standard, 6 March 1928.
Who are, who are, who are we?
We are the boys of the VFC.
We don’t drink coffee and we don’t drink tea.
WE DRINK BEER!81

Plate 50: [Darwin Junior Football team, c1930]. (Unknown, MAGNT, Scan10017, 16 August 2005)

In December 1928, a public delegation supported by the Northern Territory parliamentary representative Harold Nelson, and just months after the NAWU in August moved to extend membership to Coloured workers, called on the NAFL to end the colour bar. It was rejected.82 The public meeting further demonstrated that there was widespread public support against the colour bar and there was more at stake than football: it was a matter of rights. ‘I think it is our duty to battle for them [Coloured players]; and try and get; or see that they get; a citizens rights; and be

81 Kathy Mills, Personal communication with the author, 17 February 2009.
82 The Northern Standard, 11 December 1928.
allowed to compete in all kinds of sport in this part of the world; as in all other parts’. Vesteys, undeterred by their continued exclusion, again formed their own competition between January and March 1929. In October 1929, Robert ‘Bob’ McDonald attempted to reconcile Darwin’s football community. ‘He suggested that decent clean-living half-castes should be allowed to play. It was allowed down south and as long as these boys behaved no objection should be taken to colour.’

Attempts at compromise included suggestions to make representations to the Chief Protector, but there is no indication if this occurred, or if it did, what had been his response. Despite the growing support for the Coloured players and dwindling crowds at NAFL matches, Waratahs resisted conciliation. The Waratahs’ representatives finally ended the colour bar in December 1929, when a compromise that, in their eyes, maintained their authority, was finally reached. It produced a ‘gentlemen’s agreement’ between the clubs not to play more than six ‘half-castes’ in a team.

Considering that in the period 1897–1962 there were only ten Aboriginal players in Australia’s premier football league, the Victorian Football League, the Darwin Football League was an important chapter in Darwin’s and indeed Australia’s football history. A league run by, and comprised of, non-White players is unique during this period in Australia’s football history. The White stranglehold on sport was continuously challenged. White control and prejudice were by no means defeated but the myth of White supremacy was forever shattered and the Coloured and multiracial communities demonstrated they would resist and fight discrimination.

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83 Northern Territory Times, 28 December 1928.
84 Ibid., 18 October 1929.
85 Ibid. Cook appears to have been drawn into sport on occasions. See Northern Territory Times, 12 November 1929. Note in paper re: Dr Cook granted permission for Ponto Cubillo to fight Fred Vaughan as part of boxing program.
86 The Northern Standard, 6 December 1929. Waratahs had initially attempted to limit Coloured players to four a team, see The Northern Standard, 29 December 1928.
87 Colin Tatz, personal communication with the author, 5 August 2008.
88 Dave Nadel, email to author, 11 December 2007. Nadel has written extensively on Australian football. He indicated that he was unaware of the existence of any other non-White football leagues in Australia at this time.
both on and off the field. Remarkably, it is a story that is absent from Darwin’s social memory. Vestey’s was refused entry to the NAFL and it never played again after the colour bar. Many of its former players eventually joined the Buffaloes Football club, which assumed the mantle as flag-bearer for the Coloured community. They dominated on the playing field, participating in every grand final between 1930 to 1939 and won three premierships. Perhaps not surprisingly, Darwin’s football social memory has preferred a relatively simple narrative over a complex one. It has retained a story of triumph over racism, creating a narrative that has a seamless transition of Vestey’s into Buffaloes and claims on-field success throughout the 1930s, a story that resonates today in Darwin’s close-knit football community. What the social memory has not retained is the more complex narrative of the expulsion of Vestey’s, its continued existence in the Darwin Football League, and the parallel existence of a Whites-only Buffaloes team which played throughout the colour bar and secured its first premiership in 1926–27.

Plate 51: Waratahs, [c1930. First season following the colour bar]. (Unknown, Charles Wilson Collection, NTAS, NTRS 854, P1-Album-3-page-15_2_Top Right)

89 Lee, and Barfoot, NTFL, 52.
Whites were Whites and Blacks were Blacks

While the 1926–1929 colour bar was the most significant rift in Darwin football, it was not the last prior to World War II. Football was continuously riven by racial tensions. The 1932–33 grand final between Waratahs and Buffaloes was described by one of the many defence personnel who joined the football competition, Robert Steele, as an ‘all out brawl.’ Steele acknowledged ‘we used force, the white aggressor, you know — we used force to win … I knew — whites were whites and blacks were blacks, you know.’ In May 1933, ‘a bomb was unexpectedly thrown in the NAFL meeting ... a motion was proposed to confine eligible players to only those of European extraction.’ It is not clear who was targeted by this motion, although Buffaloes did have a number of Chinese players. At the beginning of the 1933–34 football season, Darwin was in the midst of a federal government defence build-up and a permanent garrison was established in Darwin in September 1933. During the period 1933–1939, the White population trebled from 804 to 2687, and the influence of the military over sport grew considerably due to its numbers and facilities. The Garrison footballers wished to play football as a group and approached the Wanderers club. Wanderers were keen to accept the new players but they came with a condition imposed by the military authorities: they could not play with Coloured players. Ponto Cubillo fired a parting shot, saying that there were no hard feelings and recognising that ‘the trouble has not been caused by them [soldiers], but the military authorities who wish to keep the soldiers from fraternising with us, and a few members of the club whose superiority complex outweighs their sportsmanship.’

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90 Steele, Oral history interview, Tape 1, 9.
91 The Northern Standard, 26 May 1933. The NAFL reverted to the Northern Territory Football League (NTFL) in October 1933. See The Northern Standard, 20 October 1933.
93 The Northern Standard, 28 November 1933.
In 1934–35, the NTFL expanded to four teams with the inclusion of a Garrison team. The season was disrupted throughout by a dispute over the eligibility of Barney McGinness, a ‘half-caste’ who applied to register as an NTFL umpire. Waratahs and the Garrison refused to play in games under his control and threatened to split from the league. They prevailed and McGinness was deregistered. Feelings ran high throughout the season. It was suggested that police assistance was required to control the crowds and that the Buffaloe supporters, and particularly the barracking of its Black supporters, should be stopped because it was seen to ‘inflame the players and bring about the rough and dirty tactics’.

Bonson saw the Aboriginal supporters

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94 Kathy Mills, personal communication with the author, 19 January 2009. A question mark indicates either uncertainty about the identity of the player or their first name.
95 The Northern Standard, 7 December 1934.
96 Ibid., 11 January 1935. Barney McGinness’s applications to umpire in the NTFL were rejected again on the vote of Waratahs and the Garrison in 1937–38 and 1938–39 seasons; see The Northern Standard, 5 February 1937, and 18 November 1938. For a full account of this episode, see Stephen, ‘Darwin Oval, Field of Dreams, Battleground for Rights.’
97 The Northern Standard, 11 January 1935.
in a more positive light. ‘They [the Compound mob] would come out, they used to swarm the old fence posts, right where the old oval is, they used to barrack. They barracked — one thing about them — they’re good barrackers.’\textsuperscript{98} Buffaloes won the premiership by default because Waratahs refused to play under the umpire selected by the league.\textsuperscript{99} Dissatisfied with this hollow victory, they approached Waratahs to play a ‘friendly’ game under any umpire of their choosing, but the ‘Silvertails’ refused.\textsuperscript{100}

\begin{center}
\textbf{Plate 53: Darwin Garrison Football Club, 1935. (Unknown, Museum Victoria Collection, MM 001432)}
\end{center}

The Waratahs and the Garrison elected to leave the NTFL in the 1935–36 season and formed a new all-White Darwin Football League.\textsuperscript{101} The NTFL 1935–36 season proceeded with Buffaloes, Wanderers and a new team Wallabies. Both leagues struggled somewhat and Waratahs and the Garrison rejoined the NTFL for the 1936–

\textsuperscript{98} Bonson, Oral history interview, 22–23.
\textsuperscript{99} The Northern Standard, 16 April 1935.
\textsuperscript{100} Ibid., 18 April 1935.
\textsuperscript{101} The reason given was ostensibly their objection to the voting rights held by Northern Territory Football League life members.
37 season. This was a time when the Coloured community was developing a strong, and increasingly self-confident political voice. Prominent footballers like Cooper, the McGinness brothers and William ‘Put’ Ah Mat were involved in political activism. Xavier Herbert, who was the acting superintendent at the Kahlin compound from January to June 1936, was encouraged by Reuben Cooper to call a meeting that resulted in the formation of the Euraustralian League, which later became known as the Northern Territory Half-Caste Association. William Ah Mat, an experienced union campaigner, became association secretary. In 1933, he successfully led a delegation to the relevant Commonwealth minister to change the Aboriginals Ordinance to allow ‘half-castes’ to drink in Darwin’s pubs.

102 Wanderers withdrew from the league due to financial difficulties.
103 Brian, ‘One Big Union.’ 168.
104 Austin, Never Trust a Government Man, 209. See also, De Groen and Hergenhan, eds. Xavier Herbert, 77.
105 William ‘Put’ Ah Mat was also one of the first Coloured team representatives to attend NAFL meetings in the 1930s. See Northern Territory Times, 24 February 1933.
106 Austin, Never Trust a Government Man, 210. Exemptions from the Ordinance that allowed Ah Mat and others to re-enter the hotels to drink were not enacted until 1936.
Throughout the racial vacillations of the NAFL and the NTFL during the 1930s, the focus had been on restricting or stopping the participation of Coloured and/or Chinese players. Black participation was never considered and discrimination was steadfastly maintained. Although admission of ‘an abo team of footballers’ to the NTFL had been suggested prior to the colour bar, on the condition it was organised by a ‘white man or half-caste captain’, it was ignored. Oral testimony suggests that there may have been occasional Black players in the league, but this cannot be substantiated. Sporadic reports of football at the Kahlin compound confirm that

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107 Kathy Mills, personal communication with the author, 19 January 2009. A question mark indicates either uncertainty about the identity of the player or their first name.

108 Northern Territory Times, 11 December 1926.

109 Wilson, Charles, Oral history interview by Francis Good, NTRS 226, TS 550, NTAS, Darwin, 1987, Tape 1, 4. ‘There was one from Bathurst Island who used to play without boots, but the majority had boots’. Charles Wilson played NAFL football from 1928–1930. Although both Lee and Barfoot, NTFL, 31, and Ritchie, ‘From Absence to All-Stars’, 19, indicate that Wanderers may have included ‘Full-blood’ Aborigines in their team prior to World War II, no evidence was found to support this. Lee and Barfoot refer to ‘Aboriginals’ who were unable to pay club fees in 1936–37.
football continued to be played there on an ad hoc basis. The reality of the powerlessness of Black footballers and the bigotry imposed upon them during 1930s is tragically illustrated in the photograph of the 1937–38 Waratahs premiers below. The Black man seated in the front row is identified only as ‘our mascot’. Recent evidence indicates that the Aboriginal man is probably Bertram Kantilla, a Bathurst Islander, who worked for the Royal Australian Air Force in Darwin prior to the war. The defence forces had used Black labour from the arrival of the Darwin Detachment in 1932. Bertram and many other Aboriginal football players, many of whom worked for the Armed forces during and after World War II, transformed the face of Northern Territory football in the post-World War period.

Ritchie refers to Ningle Haritos’s, Oral history interview by Francis Good, NTRS 226, TS 683, NTAS, Darwin, 1991, Tape 1, 9, where he refers to ‘Aboriginals mainly from the settlement of Delisaville and a few from Bathurst Island’, but there is no indication in the transcript if he refers to pre or post-World War II.

110 The Northern Standard, 22 November 1932. This is the first report to mention Bathurst and Melville islanders, who would later go on to dominate the NTFL in the post-war period.

111 Eric Lee, personal communication with the author, 14 October 2008. The photo (in a private collection) lists all of the White Waratahs by name.

112 Gabriel Hazelbane, personal communication with the author, 7 November 2007.

113 Powell, The Shadow's Edge, 244.
The End of an Era

In a sign that an era was coming to an end Reuben Cooper played his final game on 22 March 1939.\textsuperscript{114} His twenty-three year football career spans a period from almost total segregation of non-White athletes to Coloured domination of the football field. Cooper, along with the Bonson, McGinness, Ah Mat, Cubillo, Hazlebane and many other Coloured and Asian families proved during the 1926–1929 colour bar that bigotry and discrimination could be resisted and challenged. Success on the football field undeniably put paid to the myth of White supremacy. But despite the growing cohesion and assertiveness of Darwin’s Coloured community, sporting, social and political advances during the 1930s were slow and limited.

\textsuperscript{114} The Northern Standard, 21 March 1939. His final foray into Darwin sport came at the Darwin ANZAC Day sports later the same year. Cooper died at 44 years of age in an accident while shipping supplies along the Arnhem Land coast in 1942.
Darwin football from 1916 to 1939 spanned a period of turbulent social change. Despite South Australian and Commonwealth government policies to segregate Darwin’s multi-racial community, the town’s diverse population refused to be dictated to and used the sport field as a means of challenging the status quo, asserting its rights in the face of continuous racial prejudice. While at times the oral history has distorted and misrepresented some events from this period, the essence and significance of the social history remain intact. Darwin oval was the battleground for respect and recognition in the face of institutional racism and oppression. Football was a potent counter-narrative, a declaration of survival and resistance, and played a critical role in developing a sense of community identity. It enabled individuals to express their individual talents, while developing confidence in themselves and their community. The success and leadership skills they gained on the football field were applied to the fight for rights in the broader community. It must be remembered, however, that throughout this period ‘Blacks’ interred in the Kahlin Compound, under the control of the Aboriginals Ordinance, were excluded from league football. Although football did not stop when Australia entered World War II, the next major
chapter in football’s development and the fight for rights was postponed until the war’s end and the return to civilian rule in 1946.
Chapter 8: From Exclusion to Inclusion: World War II - 1953

Sir, - I would like to place on record the appreciation of most football spectators in respect of the debut this season of several aboriginal players in the Wanderers team. ... I received with pleasure reports of spectators eulogising the behaviour of the aboriginal members both on and off the field.¹

World War II

World War II changed Darwin forever. The physical and emotional scars run deep. The town was severely damaged by the air raids, and close to 300 people were killed.² The evacuation of the White and Coloured civilian population, completed just prior to the bombings, meant most of its citizens were torn from their homes and dispersed across southern Australia. When they returned in 1945, most found that their homes had disappeared and ‘old Darwin’ was no more. The post-war reconstruction and transition from colonial frontier outpost to a modern Australian capital was a slow one.

As physically destructive as the war was, its most lasting legacy was radical social change. This was most pronounced for the Black population, who were not evacuated. The war created unprecedented demand for labour and for many Blacks paid employment in the armed services was the first time they were treated with respect, and a hint of equality, an experience they would not forget. The war was a watershed in Northern Territory race relations, in theory marking the end of the colonial regime of ‘protection’ and replacing it with a new policy of ‘assimilation’. The 1953 Welfare Ordinance was supposed to end the era of the Aboriginals Ordinance but it only granted legal emancipation to the Coloured community. For

¹ Letter to the editor, Northern Standard, 27 February 1948.
the Black population, then declared wards of the state, only the name of the legislation had changed: they remained under the restrictive control and guardianship of the Commonwealth.

Football reflected Darwin’s chaotic wartime experience and the transition to peace. The NTFL suspended the 1941–42 season one week before the first Japanese bombing raid. For some, the bombing itself was linked to football. ‘It was a very disastrous day when we had to knock off playing football because the Japs came and bombed Darwin.’ Other oral testimony claims that members of Darwin’s ‘Black Watch’, a local militia made up of Coloured volunteers, were actually playing football on the town oval when the Japanese bombers were sighted. Football and sport did not cease during the war; in many respects it reached unprecedented heights not repeated for a long time. Wartime imperatives were a catalyst in breaking down entrenched colonial racism. For the Coloured community their liberation from the Ordinance resulted in ‘something of a normal life’. Certainly, it gave a further impetus to the flourishing of Coloured and Chinese participation in Darwin sport during the immediate post-war period. For the Black community, however, the football field was one of the few places where there was any sign of change, or hope of ‘liberation’.

When the NTFL recommenced in 1946, the shared wartime experience of Blacks and military servicemen could not be denied. Black exclusion from Northern Territory football ended in 1948 when Wanderers and the Defence force teams regularly included Black players for the first time. In 1952, St Marys, a team predominantly of Bathurst and Melville Islanders, joined the league. The integration of Darwin football occurred amidst a period of great social and political change. The union, in concert with the Aboriginal and Coloured communities, conducted coordinated parallel political campaigns for greater industrial rights for Aborigines and political rights to

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3 Hazelbane, Oral history interview, 6.
5 Tatz, Obstacle Race. 273.
‘free’ the Coloured community from the Aboriginals Ordinance. Although it could be argued that the latter was more successful than the former, union support and greater racial tolerance amongst parts of the White community were essential elements in breaking down the social boundaries and barriers prevalent during the interwar period. Darwin football’s racial desegregation set a precedent well in advance of political and legislative change. The inclusion of Black footballers finally gave them the opportunity to display their extraordinary talents which had been denied for so long. Their exuberance, skilfulness and panache would become synonymous with Northern Territory football and the very identity of the Territory itself.

**Sport and Work During the War**

War in September 1939 initially made little impact on Darwin’s daily life. The 1939–40 NTFL competition expanded to five teams, reflecting the rapid military build-up in Darwin during the late 1930s that had doubled the White population.6 Darwin sport diversified with baseball, hockey, boxing and rugby league becoming popular with defence force teams. Although the defence build-up brought many new people to the Territory, their attitudes reflected the colonial past. Major General R L Hughes, who worked with the ‘Black Watch’, described the unit as:

> a militia detachment of about 15 young men who were half castes in the main; there was the odd Chinese blood, but in the main they were half castes or islanders. They were a very fine type of young fellow; they were very good for patrolling at night because you couldn't see them in the dark.7

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7 Major General R L Hughes, Oral history interview by Alan Powell, NTRS 226, TS 381, NTAS, Darwin, 1984, 17.
Despite Hughes’s patronising view, the ‘Black Watch’ proved they were more than a match for their army colleagues by day, defeating all comers in an inter-unit athletics carnival in February 1940.\(^8\)

Although racial attitudes were largely unaffected by the advent of war, there were signs that McEwen’s 1939 White Paper on Aboriginal policy resulted in some changes in the administration of Aboriginal affairs. The newly-established Native Affairs Branch did not take long to incur the wrath of the NAWU, which had increasingly taken on the role of advocate for Aboriginal rights. After officials threatened to prohibit Aborigines from attending the pictures and football, Mr ‘Yorky’ Peel (NAWU secretary) demanded that

> the whole administration of the department should come up for the immediate and searching review so that the half-castes and aboriginals under the control of the department might at least receive the privileges of a human being, and not be treated as pariah dogs.\(^9\)

Although race relations were always problematic, meeting the labour demands of the military became a priority.

The racism that disrupted Darwin football throughout the 1930s did not end with the war. Barney McGinness, no stranger to controversy, was again at the centre of a dispute in February 1941. The NTFL felt an application from ‘a coloured umpire’ required the sanction of the Army’s Brigadier Steele who refused him permission to umpire.\(^10\) Relations between the ‘local’ population and defence force personnel were often tense. Many of the defence force were frustrated at being stationed in Darwin, far from the war. Frustration erupted in August 1941, when a brawl developed into a

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\(^8\) The Northern Standard, 13 February 1940.
\(^9\) Ibid., 1 March 1940.
looting spree in Darwin. Tensions also spilled over to the football field. Peter Talbot recalls pre-evacuation football as a ‘free for all’ where there was ‘a fight every Saturday’.

When the teams had a fight the whole crowd jumped in and backed their team-mates up. … Oh, yeah. I remember I went with my father one time and the bloody barbed wire, they rolled it [around the ground]. … And the next minute I looked and a big-punch up, … I look at my father and a lot of them other fellow too, they jump in the barb wire and push it apart, … next minute you looked towards the Army, all that Army camp there too, that’s when you see them running out with a fixed bayonet to stop the crowd. This is fair dinkum, you know.

On 16 January 1942, in the midst of the civilian evacuation, the NTFL announced that in view of the war situation the premiership competition would be suspended in preference of weekly interclub games. The League did not recommence until 1946–47. The documentary record of football and sport in Darwin from 1942 until the re-publication of the Northern Standard in June 1946 is fragmentary. I do not piece together these fragments but provide the broadest of overviews of wartime sports.

Alan Powell has provided a comprehensive account of Darwin’s wartime experience in The Shadow’s Edge. ‘Sport of all kinds flourished. Football of every code, shooting, cricket and boxing became the basis of inter-unit tournaments all the way from Darwin to Alice Springs.’ A survey of the 1941 Army News indicates that hockey, tennis, athletics, soccer, water polo, cricket, golf, baseball, basketball, table

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14 Powell, The Shadow’s Edge, 189–90.
tennis and horseracing were all played in Darwin. Australian football in particular was a feature of large-scale inter-unit events. In one lightening knockout carnival, sixteen teams participated. In Alice Springs, a football tournament in November 1942 continued for eleven days. The war played an important role in disseminating sport to many remote regions of the Northern Territory where organised sport was a rarity. Army bases often provided many Aborigines with their first sporting encounters. The history of the dissemination and adoption of sport in Northern Territory’s remote Aboriginal communities is beyond my scope but it would provide rich material for future researchers. Suffice to say, World War II was the catalyst for the rapid expansion of sport throughout the Northern Territory.

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15 Army News, A survey of the Army News was undertaken using issues from October – December 1941. After this time wartime censorship makes it difficult to glean details of specific activities. In particular names are omitted from reports.
16 The Northern Standard, 19 March 1953.
17 Powell, The Shadow’s Edge, 189. See also Reg Harris, Oral history interview by Meredith Campbell, NTAS 226, TS 859, Alice Springs, Side A, Tape 3, 1.
18 A recent oral history project undertaken by the National Library of Australia and the Australian Sports Commission has confirmed that the diffusion of sport to Aboriginal communities was largely a post-war phenomenon. This includes Bathurst and Melville Islands, the home of many of the first Blacks to enter the post-war NTFL. Ted Egan, email to author, 12 October 2007. ‘I am certain that it was servicemen during the war who introduced competitive games [Football] to Tiwi Islands and Delissaville [Belyuen].’ Port Keats, where Catholic missionaries introduced football in 1935, and Hermannsberg, a Lutheran mission where football is first reported in 1937, were exceptions. See ‘Diaries of Ted Strehlow’, 2 October 1937. ‘The lads kicked about the first football that has been made at Hermannsberg from their own tanned leather. Mr Batterbee cut it out from an old football pattern.’
19 The Northern Territory Archives Service Oral History Collection holds many testimonies of service personnel who served in Darwin and the Northern Territory during the war. Many of these oral histories include references to sport. Time constraints did not allow a thorough survey of these oral histories.
Plate 57: Pine Creek football team 1945. [front (R) to back (L) Wally Lew Fatt, Bluey Daby, Alf Smith, Gabe Hazelbane, Tom Dinham, Alley Ah Mat, Jim Quinn, Gordon Page, Boyne Litchfield, Fred Stevens, Stan Humphries, ?, Les Cronin, Bluey Sharr]. (Leo Jessup, Leo Jessup Collection, NTL, PH0098/0001)

The War wrought physical destruction on Darwin and dislocated the lives of those who served there, or were evacuated, some never to return. For the Black population there were mixed outcomes. Initially there was some suspicion that the Blacks may act as a ‘fifth column,’ but these fears were unfounded. Black labour proved to be a key factor in Darwin’s defence and was a catalyst for significant social change. Tracker Tommy, a Jingli man from Elliot, eloquently compared his pre-war work experience with that of during the war. ‘We bin only get from whitefeller nothing. We bin only work, no money. Well Army bin come up, bringem money. Well, we keep that money.’ Peter and Jay Read found there was ‘not a word of dissatisfaction with Services life spoken by those who were in actual employment’ — and they suggest that a major reason for this was that the army treated them with a degree of equality previously unknown. Nevertheless, such experiences must be

20 Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 155.

21 Read and Read, Long Time Olden Time, 129. Not all Aborigines who served during the war were paid. Members of the Northern Territory Special Reconnaissance Unit under Donald Thompson were not recognised until 1992 when medals and back payment were awarded. http://www.awm.gov.au/encyclopedia/aborigines/indigenous.asp [30 June 2008].

22 Powell, The Shadow’s Edge, 256.
seen in relation to the recent colonial past and should not be mistaken for equality. Black labourers were not formally enlisted, did not hold any rank or receive equal pay and they were employed in the most menial of tasks. The extensive use of Aboriginal labour went well beyond its social and economic impact. Wells argues that the Army’s methods of training and employing Aborigines, which she characterised as ‘guardianship, tutelage and institutional control’, were an important precursor to the ‘bureaucratic custodianship’ envisaged in McEwen’s ‘New Deal’ in Aboriginal policy.

The scale of Black employment during the war was significant. In 1943, the Native Affairs Labour unit employed 742 Aborigines. The census of June 1944 showed the Aboriginal population of the Northern Territory as 14,153. Of these, 3,314 were in regular employment; 5,857 others lived in supervised camps of all kinds. Although the depth and breadth of meaningful change to Aboriginal lives during the war is the subject of continued debate, what is undeniable is that the symbolic pre-war social boundaries were permanently altered and blurred. Although the rate and extent of social and political change following World War II were not uniform across the Northern Territory, they were most evident in Darwin.

At the end of the war, the military abandoned its Northern Territory Black labour force as quickly as they recruited it, although small groups of men, particularly from Bathurst and Melville Islands and Darwin’s Berrimah and Bagot Compounds, remained employed in Darwin. The Native Affairs Branch of the Northern Territory administration immediately sought to reimpose its regime of restriction and control.

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The natives will be, to some extent, a demobilization problem … It is evident that serious consideration will have to be given to the native question in the immediate future and that the establishment of depots and settlements in various parts of the Territory, together with a system of patrol districts and patrol officers, must be inaugurated.26

The military handed back control of the Northern Territory to civil administration in 1945. The civilian population began to return to Darwin from February 1946 despite its dilapidated state. C L A Abbott, Administrator of the Northern Territory, observed at the time that ‘Darwin as a town ceased to exist and over 50 per cent of its buildings and dwellings were destroyed.’27 Although Darwin suffered enormous damage and death during the war, the remainder of the Territory had experienced considerable infrastructure development. For the first time, all weather overland transport routes were opened to Queensland and South Australia and international air travel recommenced in April 1946. Many of Darwin’s evacuated Coloured community, returned to Darwin at the first opportunity, despite an extreme accommodation crisis. Many coloured men camped out until accommodation became available.28 Coloured women were either housed with employers or the Aborigines Inland Mission Hostel at the Bagot Reserve.29 The only accommodation available to most civilians was very rudimentary ex-military facilities such as K-9 and Parap

27 Ibid., 8.
28 Peter Talbot, Oral history interview, 11.
29 Bagot Reserve was established in 1938 to replace Kahlin Compound destroyed in the 1937 cyclone. The war interrupted its development. In 1946–47, ‘half-caste inmates’ were separated from the ‘Aboriginal population’ who were transferred to the former RAAF Air Defence Headquarters camp at Berrimah which became known as the Berrimah compound until 1951 when they returned to Bagot. See: ‘Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1946–47’, CPP, 5228, Canberra, 1946, 4. see also, Toni Bauman, Aboriginal Darwin (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2006), 130–132; and Samantha Wells, ed. Saltwater People: Larrakia Stories From Around Darwin (Casuarina: Larrakia Nation Aboriginal Corporation, 2002), 41.
Camp 118. In a major change, Darwin’s pre-war ‘Chinatown’ was not rebuilt, resulting in a redistribution of the Chinese community throughout town.

Black Breakthrough

Sport resumed almost immediately upon the return of the civilian population. The Northern Standard of June 1946 included reports on cricket, hockey, tennis, horseracing, golf and boxing. The NTFL recommenced in November with six clubs: Buffaloes, Waratahs, Wanderers, Army, Navy and Air Force. Football picked up where it had left off in 1942. Waratahs, Wanderers, and Buffaloes represented the ‘local’ population while the Defence force teams demonstrated that Darwin was in transition from war to peace. Blacks remained excluded from football.

Post-war the close relationship between the unions and Coloured community continued to strengthen in the struggle for rights. The union also became more involved in Aboriginal issues, which was reflected on the football field. Robert Hall argues that one of the consequences of Black wartime experience in the defence force labour camps was that previously disparate tribal groups began to develop a greater collective conscious and ‘a vision of a more “egalitarian future”’. Living together in labour camps, and then being transferred as a group to the Bagot, and then the Berrimah compounds following the war, further united people. Berrimah compound was ‘appalling’ even when judged by the standards of the day. Accommodation was in a parlous state, kitchen facilities inadequate and health and education facilities non-existent. The Aboriginal residents, who came mainly from

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30 Maisie Austin, The Quality of Life: A Reflection of Life in Darwin during the Post-War Years (Darwin: Colemans, 1992), 5–8.
32 The Northern Standard, 8 November 1946.
the Milingimbi, Daly River region and Melville Island, were galvanised to fight for improved conditions.34

In February 1947, one hundred Black Labourers from the Berrimah Compound employed by the Northern Territory administration, armed services or Qantas, held a stop-work meeting in Darwin. Led by a ‘sophisticated element’ of Melville Islanders, their list of claims included payment of award wages direct to the workers rather than being held in trust by Native Affairs, establishment of a government store, a school for their children, trade training for themselves and provision of mosquito nets, blankets and clothing.35 The strikers’ demands on wages, the manner of their payment and the provision of a school were met. Black workers had learnt the value of their labour and strikes became a common strategy in the years that followed.36

Their success resulted in greater self-confidence and a willingness to take direct action. The strike was the first where the union and Black labour had worked in concert. Later the same year, in a further sign of change, the NAWU removed the racial exclusion clause barring workers of a 'coloured race' from membership. Remarkably, for an issue that had caused so much conflict and tension prior to the war, the changes were made with no debate or comment.37 In December 1947 the Northern Territory also began on the long road from colonial outpost to self-government. As a tentative and typically British Colonial first step, a Legislative Council comprised of seven government appointed members and six elected members was re-established to advise the Administrator.38

The 1947–48 NTFL season reflected the changing political landscape and set an important precedent. With no fanfare, thirty-one years of Black exclusion from football ended. In November, Wanderers Football Club introduced new players:

35 Ibid., 82.
36 Brian, ‘One Big Union’, 220.
37 Ibid., 221.
38 Gilruth had an advisory council as part of his early administration.
Barrajuk and Beenamurk. They were the first Black players in a sanctioned NTFL post-war competition. Wanderers’ central role in ending the exclusion of Black football players is generally overlooked in Darwin’s social memory. It is not mentioned in Lee and Barfoot’s NTFL history. Wanderers’ groundbreaking role is unjustly overshadowed by the more often told story of the St Marys Football Club, established in 1952. Wanderers had developed a reputation as a multi-racial team since the end of the colour bar and as the 1947–48 season unfolded, they introduced numerous Black players. Burrajuk and Beenamurk were joined by Wilson, Michael and Bruce Pott. As the NTFL’s first Black players they were well known locally, although biographical information in most cases is heavily reliant on oral testimony. Tommy Burrajuck (sometimes spelt Baradjak or Burrinjuck), Johnny Bianamu (most likely Beenamurk was a mis-spelling of Bianamu), and Bruce Pott, were from the Delissaville settlement (now Belyuen), situated across Darwin harbour on the Cox Peninsula. Michael Babui, also sometimes known as Michael Bathurst, and Bobbie Wilson (better known as Robert Tudawali, of Jeddah film fame) came from Bathurst or Melville Islands which are better known today as the Tiwi Islands. It is likely, although by no means certain, that these men learnt their football at the Kahlin, Berrimah or Bagot compounds and perhaps played recreationally with Whites while working for the Defence forces during and after the war.

40 Lee and Barfoot, NTFL, 31.
41 Terry Lew Fatt, Oral history interview by Peg Havnen, NTRS 226, TS 8010, 16. There may have been other Black players but evidence is limited to match reports.
42 Delissaville/Belyuen is traditionally Larrakia land but the community became home for many Aboriginal groups from the region. It is difficult to identify the origins of many of the players. According to Ted Egan, Bruce Potts was a ‘Wagaitj’ [sic] man, and the best mark he had ever seen. Ted Egan, Sitdown Up North (Marrickville: Kerr Publishing, 1997), 35.
43 Ted Egan, email to author, 12 October, 2007. Ted Egan played NTFL football with all these men in the early 1950s and knew them well when he played, firstly for Works and Housing and then later for St Marys. For Bobby ‘Tudawali’ Wilson, see also J Ramsland and C Mooney, Remembering Aboriginal Heroes (Melbourne: Brolga Publishing, 2006), 153–157, and Egan, Sitdown Up North, 34.
There is only scant evidence hinting why the exclusion of Black players was relaxed at this time or how they came to join Wanderers. Curiously, George Holden, President of Waratahs, bastion of White football, appears to take some of the credit.

Sir, - I would like to place on record the appreciation of most football spectators in the respect of the debut this season of several aboriginal players in the Wanderers team. As I was partially responsible for having them admitted as registered players I received with pleasure reports of spectators eulogising the behaviour of the aboriginal members both on and off the field. … The success of the team was due in no small measure to the ability and keen attention to requirements of the aboriginal players.44

There is no indication of who provided the ‘keen attention’ to the requirements of the Black players or what they may have been. George Holden was working at the Berrimah compound at the time, which would have brought him into daily contact with the Aborigines interred there.45 There can be no doubt that as a keen football supporter he recognised that some of the men were good footballers who also displayed the requisite ‘good’ behaviour, necessary for acceptance into the league, although not for the Waratahs. Bobbie Wilson’s story gives the best indication of how Aboriginal men who met the uncertain and ever changing ‘expectations’ of White society were admitted to football but were also able to use it to their own advantage by gaining public recognition. Elsa Chauvel described how Wilson came to the attention of Charles Chauvel for the leading role in the film Jedda. Wilson had ‘assimilated many of the white man’s ways and in time was as well educated as many whites of his own age of twenty four years — and better spoken than many of

44 Northern Standard, 27 February 1948.
45 Les Penhall, personal communication with the author, 16 October 2008. Les Penhall, working for the Native Affairs Branch, saw George Holden working at the Berrimah compound in 1947 when he dropped off a group of Aborigines there who had been involved in Supreme Court proceedings in Alice Springs. Holden was appointed to the Native Affairs Branch on 16 December 1948. See Commonwealth of Australia List of Permanent Officers of the Commonwealth Public Service as on 30th June 1951, Vol 1. Canberra: Commonwealth Government Printer, 1951.
them.’ Wilson had worked for the RAAF during the war and immediately post-war worked in Darwin in a variety of jobs. ‘He also became a champion Australian Rules footballer, winning four trophies for playing with the “Wanderers” in Darwin in one year.’

During the early 1950s, the Native Affairs Branch provided assistance with transport to the football from Delissaville and Bagot. Oral histories also indicate that some clubs and individuals assisted Aboriginal players with transport and accommodation at a time when the Aboriginals Ordinance placed strict restrictions on their movements. As had also been the case with the initial introduction of Coloured players to Darwin football in 1916, it appears that the introduction of Black players was attributable to conforming to White expectations and receiving their patronage. It could also be argued that as a result of recent wartime experience, the changing and somewhat ambiguous social boundaries were more porous than those that existed prior to the war. The combination of conforming to White expectations, greater Black industrial and social assertiveness in association with White encouragement and support created an environment that was conducive, or at least less resistant, to Black participation in football. Although social boundaries were less rigid, pre-war prejudices did not disappear. Social conventions that dictated Waratahs were a White team, while Buffaloes relied on Coloured and Chinese players, remained firmly entrenched. Wanderers, who had not played in a grand final since 1923–24, were open to change.

‘Who Were the Racist People?’

Darwin’s race politics were complex and contradictory. The intensifying struggle for citizenship rights and liberation from the Aboriginals Ordinance necessitated the

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46 Elsa Chauvel, My Life with Charles Chauvel (Sydney: Shakespeare Head Press, 1973), 123.
47 Ibid.
49 Lee and Barfoot, NTFL, 52–53.
'imagined separation' of the Coloured and Aboriginal communities. In making the case for citizenship, the Coloured community ‘quite deliberately separated themselves from the ‘full blood Aborigines’. Many in the Coloured community denied, distanced or obfuscated their Aboriginal heritage and identified more closely with their non-Aboriginal parentage due to the restrictions and controls placed upon Aborigines and part-Aborigines by the Aboriginals Ordinance. These tensions and contradictions were reflected both on and off the sports fields. Although Darwin was commonly perceived as a ‘very cosmopolitan and very easy society’, it was also noted that there was ‘a very definite line of demarcation between the Aboriginals and the part-coloured people.’ Ningle Haritos, a Greek migrant, and Wanderers player saw it this way:

…the Wanderer's team used a lot of Aboriginal, or part Aboriginals… the Wanderers weren't racist at all. Not like the Buffalo team in Darwin … They were all coloured people, but they didn't have full bloods playing with them. It was the Wanderer's people that first used full blood Aboriginals, mainly from Delissaville native settlement and a few from Melville Island. And of course, since that I think - just saying, who were the racist people? The part Aboriginals or the white people?  

In the flux of post-war reconstruction, Darwin’s Coloured and Chinese communities, with their large extended families, gave the town one of its few social anchors. Union links placed them at the heart of a strong local multi-racial working class. In

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51 Ibid., 91.
53 Amelia Shankelton, Oral history interview by Sandra Saunders, NTRS 226, TS 324, NTAS, Darwin, 22
54 Ibid., 21.
55 Ningle Haritos, Oral history interview, Tape 1, 8.
addition, as Wells noted, ‘in a town dominated by sport, the “Coloured” families dominated.’ The pre-eminence of Coloured and Chinese athletes is reflected in Vos, The Role Models, which nominates two Coloured, two Chinese and two Whites as the leading athletes between 1947 to 1953. This complex social dynamic may partly explain why the entry of Black players into the NTFL was not the subject of racist commentary. The union-run and left-leaning Northern Standard newspaper reports of the late 1940s and early 1950s no longer used pejorative terms such as ‘nigger’, or ‘abo’, common in earlier periods. Native or Aboriginal were common terms, but these too were absent from sports reports. Although relations between the Coloured and Aboriginal communities were multifaceted and problematic, resulting in a political campaign seeking legislative differentiation, there was no outward antagonism or resistance to greater Aboriginal inclusion in football. Similar to the removal of the racial exclusion clause from the NAWU membership, the absence of public comment on football’s racial integration appears to have been unremarkable, suggesting greater racial tolerance in parts of the Darwin community.

Racial integration accelerated during the 1948–49 NTFL season when the Army-Royal Australian Air Force team (Army–RAAF) also introduced Black players. Stephen, Raphael, Jacob, Peo Michael and Paddy were all Bathurst or Melville Islanders who were probably part of the itinerant Black labour force employed by the defence forces. Unlike the previous year, when reports made no comment on the ‘colour’ of Wanderers’ Black players, the 1948–49 reports referred to the ‘coloured boys’ of both the Army–RAAF and Wanderers. The use of ‘coloured boys’ here is noteworthy because previously this specifically referred to people of mixed descent, indicating that Darwin’s racial boundaries were being redefined and blurred further. Despite the admission of Blacks to the NTFL, the discriminatory Aboriginals

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56 Wells, ‘The Long March’, 175.
57 Vos, The Role Models, 10–21.
58 The Northern Standard, 3 December 1948. See also, Egan, Sitdown Up North, 18; and Ted Egan, email to author, 12 October 2007. Raphael (Aputimii), Jacob (Pautjimmi), Peo (usually spelt Pio, Tipiloura), Stephen (Bennett) Michael (Babui), Paddy (family name unknown).
59 Ibid.
Ordinance restricted their participation. In October 1948, one of the earliest ‘representative’ games on record was played between a team representing the Alice Springs Football League and the NTFL. The estimated crowd at the game was 3,000, at a time when Darwin’s population numbered approximately 8,673.60 Despite featuring regularly in Wanderers and Army–RAAF’s best players, no Black players were selected for Darwin. The Alice Springs team included a number of Coloured players who, under the Aboriginals Ordinance, would normally have been interred at the Bagot compound when in Darwin. Rather than suffer that indignity, Alice Springs players chose to sleep on one of Darwin’s beaches.61 In 1949, in another sign that attitudes were changing, the NTFL was openly accused of racial discrimination in the non-selection of ‘full-blood aborigines in the team’ for a representative game in Alice Springs. The NTFL secretary defended the league’s actions, indicating that Blacks were considered for selection but ‘if non-aboriginal players were available who could do the job equally well, they should be selected.’ 62 More revealing were his subsequent comments, demonstrating the insidiousness of the Aboriginals Ordinance.

60 Report on the Administration of the Northern Territory for Year 1946-47, 18. This figure is total population, including Aborigines.
61 The Northern Standard, 22 October 1948.
62 Ibid., 18 March 1949.
Players had been happy to play with natives and would do so again. … In Alice Springs, however, the native would have to be accommodated in the compound and would have to be out of town after 6 pm. The result of this would be that after the match the other players would attend the social arranged while the native players would have to return to the compound. On the return trip, with the team freed from the routine of training, there would be stops at hotels and a drink or two in which the natives could not join. Consequently, both in Alice Springs and during the return the distinction between whites and blacks would be emphasized rather than reduced.63

**Political Campaigns**

As was the case in pre-war Darwin, the football field was once again the public stage to contest and redefine racial boundaries. The integration of Darwin football was not indicative of greater racial tolerance throughout the community. In February 1949, six Black children were expelled from the Darwin public school. One response to the children’s plight indicates the importance of football in framing public perceptions.

Sir — It seems a pretty rotten state of affairs when kiddies because of their colour, are forbidden to attend our public school. … The native children play in the backyards with our children. Coloured men are prominent in our sporting fields and are always as tidy, well-mannered, and well-behaved as any others. But when it comes to education the policy seems to be keep them down or you may not have your slave maids or house boys much longer.64

The NAWU and the Northern Standard co-ordinated a campaign to overturn the decision to segregate Black children, calling a public meeting highlighting that such

63 The Northern Standard, 18 March 1949.
64 Ibid., 18 February 1949.
measures were contradictory to both Commonwealth policy and the United Nations Charter.\textsuperscript{65} The establishment of a school for Blacks at the Bagot compound calmed the issue.

Although it is clear that the administrative regime remained firmly founded on institutional racism, and racism was widespread, it is equally clear that race relations in Darwin had altered dramatically. Darwin’s population was growing quickly, a growth not matched by a rise in housing stocks. Many were compelled to live in hostels, work camps or shared accommodation. Only senior public servants could be provided with housing of a reasonable standard. One affect of this ramshackle development was that the town gained a reputation as a social ‘melting pot’.\textsuperscript{66} The attitudes and mores of colonial frontier ‘old Darwin’ did not disappear but were subsumed and challenged by a surge of post-war immigrants from interstate and abroad.

The 1950s were a dynamic period in Australia’s history. Darwin was modernised and its geographical and social isolation greatly reduced. Although many White Australians still regarded Darwin and the Northern Territory as the last frontier, the Commonwealth’s ideal was to reshape its image to conform to the rest of Australia.\textsuperscript{67} The rapid growth and change in Darwin’s population was reflected in sport. Sport was no longer the domain of White males. Coloured domination of football was transferred across the sporting landscape. Women’s sport, particularly basketball (a later version of which became netball), was very popular and dominated by Coloured and Chinese sportswomen,\textsuperscript{68} who played at the NAWU Stadium until 1952.\textsuperscript{69} The

\begin{itemize}
\item[65] Ibid., 11 March 1949.
\item[66] Mickey Dewar, ‘You Are What You Eat: Food and Cultural Identity,’ in Modern Frontier, 71.
\item[67] Wells, et. al., ‘Introduction,’ in Modern Frontier, xvi.
\item[68] From 1948 to approximately 1953, women in Darwin played a version of ‘basketball’, now known as netball. Sometime in 1952 or 1953, women decided as a group to change to international rules, or basketball as it is known today.
\end{itemize}
reconstituted Soccer Association made it clear that in their league ‘all European, native and mixed race players are equally welcome.’\textsuperscript{70} The DCRC fielded teams in tennis, basketball and soccer. ‘New’ Australians made their mark by joining all sports\textsuperscript{71} and introduced new ones such as volleyball to the town.\textsuperscript{72}

Despite Darwin football’s cosmopolitan façade, sport in general remained segregated. Although few restrictions were imposed on Coloured and Chinese sports participation, Blacks remained excluded from all sports, except football. The fact remained that the ubiquitous Aboriginals Ordinance dominated and directed the lives of all those under its jurisdiction. A concerted campaign throughout 1950 to 1951, by the NAWU and Darwin’s Coloured community, continually attacked and challenged the injustices of the Ordinance. The developing campaign, which focused on human and industrial rights, illustrates how perceptions and the dynamics of race relations had changed in the post-war environment. Although McEwen’s 1939 ‘New Deal’ on Aboriginal policy included an acknowledgement that Aborigines were entitled to full citizenship, the war and post-war reconstruction had intervened in its implementation. The policy focus of post-war assimilation shifted from colour to civics, a move and adherence to shared norms and conduct based on equal rights and responsibilities.\textsuperscript{73} In the Northern Territory the post-war administration claimed that it had adopted a ‘laissez faire’ attitude to the Coloured population in town areas with a view to exclude them from the Aboriginals Ordinance as a pre-cursor to granting them full citizenship rights although this was more rhetorical camouflage than reality.\textsuperscript{74} It was not until Paul Hasluck’s appointment as Minister for Territories

\textsuperscript{70} The Northern Standard, 22 April 1949.
\textsuperscript{71} Ibid., 7 April 1950.
\textsuperscript{72} Ibid., July 1949.
\textsuperscript{73} McGregor, ‘Nation and Assimilation’, 18.
\textsuperscript{74} A R Driver, Letter to the Director of Northern Territory Affairs, Department of the Interior, 9 April 1951. National Archives of Australia, A431 1951/889, barcode 66582.
(1951–63) that that this ‘virtual revolution’\(^\text{75}\) in policy began to have some administrative effect.

Black workers from the Berrimah and Bagot compounds, led by a Wagait man, Laurence Urban, initiated an industrial campaign.\(^\text{76}\) In November 1950, 300 staged a two-day lightning sit-down strike. The NAWU was committed to support a campaign for full award wages and conditions for Aboriginal workers because, ‘a policy of high wages and conditions of all workers could not be carried out while the Aboriginal workers are held in slavery to provide cheap labour.’\(^\text{77}\) Tensions rose when Black strike leader, Fred Waters, a Larrakia man, was detained by officers of the Native Affairs branch and deported to Haasts Bluff, a government settlement west of Alice Springs, sparking a furore.\(^\text{78}\) The subsequent High Court case bought by the NAWU only confirmed that the Aboriginals Ordinance took precedence over all other legislation in relation to Aborigines and they would continue to be governed and defined according to their racial origins.\(^\text{79}\) The case exposed the Commonwealth’s contradictory position of supporting the Universal Declaration of Rights at the same time it imposed discriminatory legislation. The public debate in Darwin resulted in the reformation of the Half-caste Progressive Association. The Association speakers referred to violations of the Atlantic Charter, and the Four Freedoms of the United Nations Declaration of Human Rights. The meeting called for the complete exclusion of people of ‘mixed blood’ from the Aboriginals Ordinance and the granting of full citizenship. In a speech, Jack McGinness demanded ‘full citizenship rights. We will not tolerate the Dog License system any

\(^{75}\) Donovan, At the Other End of Australia, 184.

\(^{76}\) Wells, Saltwater People, 41.

\(^{77}\) The Northern Standard, 1 December 1950.

\(^{78}\) Ibid., 16 February 1951. See also Wells, Saltwater People, 41–46.

longer. The campaign for Water’s release was successful and he returned to Darwin on 22 March.81

**The End of the Aboriginals Ordinance**

Jack McGinness, was a committed campaigner on behalf of the Australian Half-caste Progressive Association and the NAWU. As a rights advocate, union representative, and well-known sportsman he had extensive links to the community that ensured the campaign for citizenship was well informed and co-ordinated. The nexus between sport and politics in Darwin was highlighted in his speech to the All-Australian Congress of Trade Unions held in Melbourne in September 1951. ‘We part-aborigines have an unjust ordinance imposed on us which is against the wishes of all political, industrial, religious, cultural and sporting organisations.’82 In March 1952, McGinness presided over the Australian Half-caste Progressive Association’s first annual meeting and ensured that the NAWU gave its ‘full backing’ to its call for unconditional citizenship rights.83 McGinness and the Association maintained the pressure by announcing that if their demands for full citizenship were not met they would seek redress from the United Nations.84 Hasluck confirmed in August 1952 that new legislation was being prepared for submission to the Northern Territory Legislative Council by the end of the year. He gave a comprehensive statement on the new legislation indicating that there were ‘many natives, a few full-blood as well as mixed-blood, who were ready for the responsibility of citizenship. Although he stated that there would need to be a system of ‘wards’ in need of ‘special attention’ there was no hint of the legislative semantics that would ensure that no person other than a ‘full-blood’ Aborigines could be declared a ward.85

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80 The Northern Standard, 9 March 1951.  
81 Ibid., 30 March 1951.  
82 Ibid., 23 September 1951.  
83 Ibid., 21 March 1952.  
84 Ibid., 11 July 1952.  
85 Ibid., 8 August 1952.
Amidst the constant campaigning for citizenship rights for the Coloured community, a new NTFL club, Saint Marys, sought affiliation in September 1952.\textsuperscript{86} St Marys was an initiative of the Catholic Church to provide an opportunity for the many Bathurst and Melville Islanders employed by the armed services to play football and in so doing remain under the watchful eye of the church during free weekends, in ‘Sin City.’ Ted Egan, played a key role in the team’s introduction to the league.

Bishop O’Loughlin asked me if I would start a team, mainly to allow the opportunity for Bathurst Island Aboriginals to play, because they were very, very good footballers. But he didn’t want them to play in other teams, but he felt they would be a formidable force if they played in Darwin.\textsuperscript{87}

\textsuperscript{86} Ibid., 18 September 1952.
\textsuperscript{87} Ted Egan, Oral history interview by Francis Good, NTRS 226, TS 676, NTAS, Darwin, 1991, Tape 1, 1.
Despite the inclusion of many Black players in the Wanderers and Defence force teams since 1948, racist attitudes amongst some White football administrators were deeply entrenched. There was resistance, cynical scepticism and overt racism towards a team composed of a majority of Bathurst and Melville Islanders.

There was a couple of old Darwin conservatives on the NTFL committee, with typically racist objections — ‘We know these boongs … they won’t turn up for games … they smell … they won’t wear boots, they’ll take over the competition.’

The vote to admit St Marys only succeeded when Wanderers threw their support behind the initiative and voted in its favour. The NTFL competition of 1952–53 was made up of five teams: Waratahs, Wanderers, Buffaloes, Works and Housing and St Marys. The teams’ makeup illustrates the complex social boundaries and diversity of Darwin at the time. The newest team St Marys entered their first season with a team consisting of ‘one Chinese — David Lee, three mixed race blokes — Benny and Murray Cubillo and Gordon Roe, two whites – Johnny Vaughan and me [Ted Egan] the rest were from Bathurst Island.’ Wanderers included Black, Coloured and White players, Works and Housing, and Buffaloes included Coloured, White and Chinese players, while Waratahs remained staunchly White. When St Marys surprised the pundits by making the semi-finals against Wanderers in their first season, it was the first NTFL final where a majority of the players were Black. Since their introduction to the NTFL, Black players had added a new and exciting dimension to the League. Wanderers, who had not played in a grand final since 1924–25, played in three out of four between 1948–49 and 1951–52. The impact of the quality and style of the Black players was indicative of the future of Northern Territory football. ‘Brilliant high flying and flashing wing attacks by both sides kept the crowd on tip-toe until the final bell rang and gave barrackers plenty of the

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88 Egan, Sitdown Up North, 51.
89 Gabriel Hazelbane, personal communication with the author, Darwin, 13 August 2008.
90 Egan, Sitdown Up North, 55.
spectacular football which makes Aussie Rules the darling of the crowd.’ 91 St Marys Football Club would go on to become one of the most successful in Australian football winning twenty-six premierships between 1952 and 2007–8. 92

The advent of Wanderers and St Marys opened the doors to greater Black participation in other sports that had previously excluded them. St Marys were joined in the Darwin basketball competition by a team from the Bagot Aboriginal reserve, acknowledged as the ‘first ‘native only’ team to play in the competition. 93 The Bagot team made history as the first from Darwin’s ‘compound’ admitted to a town competition: eighty-four years of sporting exclusion and denial had ended. The Bagot basketball team was often referred to as a ‘crowd pleaser,’ 94 and went on to win the Darwin B grade competition at their first attempt. 95 The end of Black exclusion opened the door to Black and Coloured sports people from across the Northern Territory but it was not be the end of the battle for human rights.

91 The Northern Standard, 10 February 1953.
92 For St Marys record since 1952 see http://www.sportingpulse.com/club_info.cgi?c=1-2860-25376-0-0&sID=27824, [12 October 2008].
93 The Northern Standard, 23 April 1953.
94 Ibid., 23 April 1953.
95 Ibid., 3 September 1953.
Black inclusion in Darwin sport, although long in coming and hard fought, was well in advance of political and legislative change. The Welfare Ordinance was finally passed by the Northern Territory Legislative Council in June 1953, but it did not take effect until May 1957.\(^{96}\) Nevertheless, it signalled a significant shift in Australian public policy, a "shift from exclusion to inclusion of Aborigines in the national community, and thereby a shift in how the nation itself was imagined."\(^{97}\) It was however, an illusory change because it only affected the Coloured community and distracted attention from cruel reality. Although it freed the Coloured population from the control of the Aboriginals Ordinance, the Welfare Ordinance condemned Aborigines to a further eleven years of Commonwealth control as wards of the state until the introduction of the Social Welfare Ordinance in 1964. The campaign for citizenship rights for Darwin’s Coloured community was built upon their


\(^{97}\) McGregor, ‘Nation and Assimilation,’ 22.
interrelationship with the union movement. The union also played a key role in supporting the industrial rights of Aboriginal people that also had its affect on Darwin’s football field. It demonstrated that regardless of individual achievement, collective action was the essential element to achieve meaningful change. This was proven in campaigns in support of strike action for award wages and Aboriginal advocates like Fred Waters. Similarly, Black success and teamwork on the football field developed greater self-confidence and collective consciousness, as it had for the Coloured community in the inter-war period. Sport paved the way for many Aborigines to gain sporting and social acceptance and success, and as such was a catalyst for social inclusion. It also developed the confidence and leadership skills necessary for some Aborigines to enter the political fray. The battle for sporting equality in the Northern Territory from 1869 had been tortuous and hard fought. The advances on the sports field took until the late 1960s and early 1970s to translate into a political platform for legislative freedom.
Chapter 9: Epilogue

We’re all different, but sport, especially Australian Football, helps connect us. It unites us.¹

The Northern Territory has come a long way since the well-intentioned but seriously flawed welfare-and-wardship era of the 1950s and 1960s. In some areas, there has been progress. The Northern Territory has more than a modicum of self-government — but not in areas like euthanasia, uranium mining or Aboriginal affairs. There are now five Aboriginal Legislative Assembly members. Forty three percent of Northern Territory land is ostensibly in the hands of Aborigines and they ‘own’ iconic national parks like Kakadu, Uluru and Nitmiluk gorge, albeit in a ‘non-owning’ way (as discussed below). Aboriginal art from the Territory adorns the walls of public and private collections in Australia and overseas. Darwin reborn and rebuilt has recast its image from distant outback frontier to modern cosmopolitan northern capital. On the other hand, some things have regressed. ‘The Emergency Intervention’ is an admission of the complete failure of governments to provide basic services to Aboriginal communities or to negotiate a meaningful accommodation with Aborigines. Eighty-two Aboriginal communities and forty-seven town camps have been declared ‘prescribed areas’,² subject to the special measures of the Northern Territory Emergency Response Act 2007 and the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. All aspects of Aboriginal people’s lives within these areas are subject to ‘intervention’; government scrutiny and control has not been seen to such an extent not seen since the Aboriginals Ordinance. One constant positive force throughout the political, economic and social vicissitudes has been sport.

Sporting ‘Freedom’

The Northern Territory’s post-war reconstruction, which gained momentum during the 1950s, was the catalyst to ‘a period of extraordinary change’ that set the development agenda for the Territory for the remainder of the twentieth century. To implement the transformation, Darwin became the ‘Canberra of the north’. Commonwealth public servants flowed into the town, and to a lesser extent, Alice Springs and other regional centres.

Sport reflected the rapid change. Sport participation, particularly in Darwin, thrived. In 1953, C S Edmunds, in a speech advocating an increase in Darwin recreation resources in the Legislative Assembly, argued that ‘there was probably a record number of sporting teams in Darwin compared to any town of similar size in Australia.’ The efflorescence of sport was attributable to a number of factors beyond simple population growth. The most significant growth was in women’s sport. Restricted to tennis and golf before the war, it quickly broadened to include hockey, basketball and softball post-war.

The introduction of the Welfare Ordinance 1953 ushered in a ‘normal life’ for Darwin’s large Coloured community who embraced their newly won ‘freedom’. The 1950s and 1960s were a golden era in Northern Territory sport dominated by Aboriginal, Coloured and Asian athletes. It came to an abrupt end when Darwin was destroyed by Cyclone Tracy on Christmas eve, 1974. The cyclone is an important landmark in Territory history: the reconstruction of the city and the establishment of self-government in 1978 was the beginning of a new era. Sport, although still an

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3 Wells, et. al., Modern Frontier, xvii.
5 Northern Territory News, 24 September 1953. Darwin sports listed were ‘14 cricket, 19 basketball, eight soccer, 5 Australian Rules, 5 rugby teams, 66 tennis teams, two rifle clubs, a table tennis association, a softball competition and the prospect of a baseball competition.’

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important part of Territory society, was no longer as dominant a social agent as it had been in earlier periods.

The only comprehensive guides to post World War II sport in the Northern Territory are in *The Role Models*,6 the *Northern Territory Sports Hall of Champions*7 and *Black Gold*.8 Although each list of sporting champions is selected according to different criteria, viewed collectively they provide an overview of the development of Northern Territory sport and its greatest exponents. The selections highlight the Northern Territory’s cultural diversity, extraordinary sporting talent and the over-representation of athletes of Aboriginal and/or Asian descent. They are also a roll call and testimony to those who rose above the prejudice, racism and obstacles that the ‘system’ had placed upon their lives. *The Role Models* has seventy recipients from 1947 to 2006, of whom thirty-eight are of Aboriginal and/or Asian descent. The *Northern Territory Sports Hall of Champions* has forty-seven nominations, of whom twenty-six are of Aboriginal and/or Asian descent. Of the ten admitted to the Hall of Champions, seven are of Aboriginal descent. *Black Gold* is restricted to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders but of the 172 inductees since 1868, twenty-two are from the Northern Territory.9 Given the Aboriginal percentage of the population, this disproportion is remarkable.

**Breakthroughs on the National Stage**

The 1950s marked a number of important firsts on the national stage for Northern Territory sport. Darwin was, and remains, the epicentre. Although talented athletes emerged from its regions, it was the result of Commonwealth Aboriginal policies that displaced many from their own country to urban centres rather than genuine opportunities in the bush. Two of the earliest sportsmen to gain prominence outside

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6 Vos, ed., *The Role Models*.
8 Tatz and Tatz, *Black Gold*.
the Territory were Aboriginal men removed from their families as children under Commonwealth policy and transferred to the Alice Springs ‘half-caste’ institution known as ‘The Bungalow’: they were pathfinders.

Henry Peckham was the first of a long line of football players to make their mark in southern leagues. Peckham was born in Darwin in 1926, although his family was from the Katherine region. Henry learnt his football in Darwin and Alice Springs where football began in 1946. A truck driver, his work enabled him to become a full-time footballer playing in Alice Springs during its winter competition and Darwin during the ‘wet’. In 1950, he played for West Adelaide in the South Australian National Football League. He came to prominence by kicking five goals, and was chaired from the ground by his own team and his opponents. His time with Wests was short-lived because opposition teams resorted to rough play to curb his brilliance. After six games for West, he returned to the Territory where he continued to play and coach with distinction for many years.

Wally McArthur was born in Borroloola in 1933. In 1942, after the bombing of Darwin, he was evacuated from ‘The Bungalow’ to Mulgoa Mission near Penrith, New South Wales. In 1948, he attended Penrith High where he represented the school with great success in the high school athletics championships. In 1949 he was transferred to St Francis Anglican boys home in Adelaide where his athletic career burgeoned. After continuing conflict with South Australian athletics officials, whom he believed were biased against his Aboriginal background, he turned professional and won ten events. Throughout the period 1949–1953, McArthur had played rugby league in Adelaide, winning the Semaphore club’s best and fairest. In 1953, he received an offer to play rugby league in England; there he played 165 games until

11 The Dead Heart, 29 July 1946. The Central Australian Football Association was established on 17 July 1947, See also Centralian Advocate, 19 July 1947.
13 Ibid., 9 July 2003. See also Northern Territory Sports Hall of Champions’ nomination.
his return to Australia in 1959. He continued to play league in country New South Wales and Queensland until 1965.14

Despite a long sporting history from 1869, there were no official Northern Territory representative teams until the 1950s. Demographics make it almost impossible for the Territory to be competitive at a national level although it has often surprised more credentialed opponents. A feature of Territory sports teams was the prevalence of athletes of Aboriginal and/or Asian heritage. It was the new post-war sport of basketball that sent the first Northern Territory men’s and women’s representative teams interstate in 1954 and 1959 respectively.15 Basketball was very popular in

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14 Tatz, Black Gold, 218. See also Northern Territory Sports Hall of Champions nomination.
15 Basketball was introduced to Darwin during World War II. The Darwin Basketball Association was formed in 1948. Austin, A Brief History of Basketball in Darwin. Basketball also began in Alice Springs in 1948. Harris, Oral history interview, Side B, Tape 3, 17.
Darwin during the 1950s and drew large crowds. Both teams reflected the predominance of Chinese and Coloured athletes. The majority of the 1954 men’s basketball squad of fourteen, who played at the Australian Basketball championships in Brisbane, came from Darwin’s’ Chinese and Coloured communities, along with one Latvian migrant and two Anglo-Australians. The 1959 women’s team were all from Darwin’s Coloured community.


The remarkable success of Territory throughout the 1950s and 1960s\textsuperscript{16} ended tragically when Cyclone Tracy destroyed Darwin. One of Australia’s worst natural

\textsuperscript{16} Aboriginal and/or Asian sporting success between 1947 and 1974 is remarkable. See: Vos, ed., The Role Models. Of the thirty-six recipients identified in The Role Models from 1947 to 1974, twenty-nine are of Aboriginal and/or Asian descent; Northern Territory Sports Hall of Champions. Of the twenty-six Aboriginal and/or Asian nominations, sixteen were most active between 1953 and 1974.
disasters it was followed by its largest mass evacuation of 35,000 people. Surviving Tracy was embedded in Darwin’s collective identity and boundaries of time and historical status were determined according to ‘BC and AD, before the cyclone and after the disaster’. Responses to the city’s reconstruction varied from those who felt old Darwin was gone and it’s ‘becoming like really any other southern city’ and others who believed that ‘the atmosphere of old Darwin and its relaxed and accepting character had returned.’ The reconstruction and the rapid population growth also affected sport. It included the establishment of the Marrara sporting precinct from the mid-1980s, designed to consolidate and modernise the city’s sporting facilities. Although the new high quality facilities were a means of lifting sporting standards, many felt they contributed to the loss of the close community sporting links of old Darwin. Although the pre-Tracy period was one of great achievement for Territory athletes, the post-Tracy modern era developed many of its best-known sporting identities in today’s professional national competitions and on the international stage.

Since the mid-1950s, the Northern Territory has acted as a nursery for southern football leagues. A steady stream of players travelled to South Australia, Western Australia and Victoria and although some struggled to make the difficult transition, others had long and distinguished careers. The most successful Northern Territory

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18 Bill Bunbury, *Cyclone Tracy: Picking Up the Pieces* (Freemantle: Freemantle Arts Centre, 1994), 137.
19 Ibid. There are those who believed ‘Old Darwin’ ended with World War II. The ‘Old Darwin’ that lives on in the social memory is dependent on the age of the storyteller.
20 Darwin’s pre-cyclone population was 43,000. In 1978, the population had exceeded 50,000 and by 1998, it was 70,000. Powell, *Far Country*, Centenary edition (Melbourne: Melbourne University Press, 2000), 236.
sports team at a senior national level was the 1988 Northern Territory football team that competed in the National Football League’s Bicentennial Australian Football Carnival in Adelaide. The team won the second division, a feat considered the ‘greatest single triumph in the history of Territory sport.’ On the cusp of the Australian Football League’s (AFL) national expansion, the team comprised some of the most famous names in Northern Territory football, past and present, demonstrating the legacy and importance of Aboriginal and Asian sportsmen to the game. The Ah Mat, Roe, Rioli, Dunn, Long, Jefferey, McLean, Vigona, Motlop and Wanganeeen families, among others, were all represented. Many of the team would be in the forefront of the nationalisation and commercialisation of the AFL from the 1980s onwards. In 2009, twenty-six Territory footballers were on senior AFL lists; twenty-one of them claim an Aboriginal and/or Asian heritage.

**Breakthroughs on the International Stage**

The major international stage is, of course, the Olympics. Here too the Aboriginal and Asian contribution to Territory sport is undeniable. The Territory’s first Olympian was a basketball player. Michael Ahmatt, born in Townsville but raised in Darwin. He had an extraordinarily successful career representing the Northern Territory and South Australia. He starred in the South Australian Basketball League from 1960 to 1979. He was the first Aboriginal Olympian to represent Australia in basketball in Tokyo (1964) and Mexico (1968). The Territory has a proud Olympic history and has produced eight Olympians, of whom four are of Aboriginal heritage and one Chinese.

The most successful Olympic sport is hockey, in which four Territory players have represented Australia. First introduced in 1938 by the armed services, hockey quickly

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24 See Appendix 5: NTFL Bicentennial Carnival Team: Second Division Champions.
26 See Appendix 6: Northern Territory Olympians.
gained in popularity post-war. In association with basketball and softball, hockey played a key role in greatly increasing women’s participation in sport and Coloured and Chinese players were prominent. The strong hockey community in Darwin produced its first Olympian in 1996. Nova Peris was born in Darwin in 1971. She came from a strong sporting background and she first represented the Northern Territory at seventeen. At the 1996 Atlanta Olympics, as a member of the Australian women’s hockey team, she became the first Aboriginal woman to win an Olympic Gold medal. Peris’s extraordinary all round athletic talent was further demonstrated when she switched from hockey to athletics, winning Commonwealth Gold medals in the individual 200 metres and 100 metre relay teams in 1998 at Kuala Lumpur. In the Sydney 2000 Olympics, she ran in the 400-metre relay team with Cathy Freeman. The latest Olympian is another Aboriginal hockey player, Des Abbott, who played at the Beijing Olympics. Olympians in hockey, shooting, basketball and boxing, considered with the development of football throughout the Northern Territory, provide a solid foundation to understanding the growth of sport in Darwin, and to a lesser extent, Alice Springs since World War II.

Remote Possibilities

For those from remote communities, sporting success remains difficult, if not impossible. Their lives have been shaped by the continuous struggle not only for basic rights but also for elementary services that others take for granted. Consequently, they have not had the same sporting opportunities or success as their urban counterparts. This is not a simple urban/bush dichotomy because the struggles were inter-related but change was slower, less obvious and more fractured in remote areas. It is beyond my scope to discuss the details of the battle for human and legal rights. It is not possible to illustrate how the struggle in the Northern Territory is

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28 Of the eight female Northern Territory inductees into the Aboriginal and Islander Sports Hall of Fame in Black Gold, four were renowned hockey players. In The Role Models, six of the nine female award winners of Aboriginal and/or Asian heritage were hockey players.
linked to the broader Australian fight for Aboriginal rights but a sample of some of the most prominent issues illustrates the obstacles that have confronted Aborigines.

In the immediate post-war period, White settlement beyond Darwin and Alice Springs was limited to small settlements on the Stuart Highway, mining outposts and missions. In 1947, the Territory’s third and fourth largest towns were Tennant Creek and Katherine, with White populations of 695 and 371 respectively.29 The first state-federal assimilation policy, introduced as an idea in 1939, included a new settlement program that required all Aborigines not associated with established missions or cattle stations to relocate. During the 1950s, the Commonwealth established or consolidated thirteen new government settlements and fourteen mission stations.30 The settlements were considered a key component of assimilation as a means of delivering welfare services, such as education and training, housing and health care, while achieving their prime function of providing Aborigines with an environment ‘suited to his stage of development, for his ultimate and inevitable contact with white civilization.’31 Aborigines were not consulted, let alone compensated. Once relocated, their lives were regimented and controlled by settlement or mission superintendents, until the introduction of the Social Welfare Ordinance 1964. Although only devised as a temporary measure, until Aborigines had ‘advanced’,32 the government settlements, now referred to as communities, are a permanent feature of the Territory landscape.

As government settlements developed, the Welfare Branch held the conflicting role of employer and regulator of Aboriginal workers. The Welfare Ordinance 1953 and the Wards Employment Ordinance 1953 were intended as a means of regulating and

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29 Population figures were exclusive of ‘Full-Blood’ Aboriginal people. See Wells, et. al., eds. Modern Frontier, Appendix A, Table 3, 187.
31 Ibid., 284. See National Archives of Australia, Canberra, A452/1 1959/2266, Native Welfare Programme in the NT.
32 Ibid., 288.
controlling Aboriginal employment, training, wages, clothing and rations. The reality was that wages were determined according to race, ignoring the skills and experience of individuals. ‘Wages’ on settlements varied widely while some pastoralists, legally bound to pay the prescribed wage, found that subsidies to employ Aborigines and their dependents made it ‘more profitable to grow niggers than beef’. In 1966, the NAWU bought a case before the Commonwealth Conciliation and Arbitration Commission to include Aborigines in the Cattle Station Industry (Northern Territory) Award. Although the case was successful, the Commission ruled that ‘wage justice’ be postponed until 1968, because Aborigines would need time to adjust to ‘real’ money. The concept of wardship, under the Welfare Ordinance, was abolished by the Social Welfare Ordinance 1964 but Aborigines remained wards for the purposes of employment, wages and training until the Wards Employment Repeal Ordinance 1971.

Under such a restrictive regime, Aboriginal political activism in the Northern Territory gained pace in the 1960s. In December 1961, the Northern Territory Council for Aboriginal Rights (NTCAR) was established. It was ‘the first organised initiative by Aborigines themselves for common action in civic affairs.’ Its broad aim was to ‘obtain justice for all’, guided by the United Nations Universal Declaration of Rights. Its objectives included the granting of full citizenship rights, the right to vote, equal pay for Aborigines, the right to work, the transfer of education funding to the federal education authority and the end to segregation of education. The first NTCAR committee consisted of Aborigines from remote missions, welfare settlements and Bagot. As could be expected, government and

33 The Wards Employment Ordinance 1953 commenced operation in 1959.
37 Ibid.
38 Until 1976 NTCAR focused its activities on the Gurindji walk-off. The organisation wound up in 1976 when other Aboriginal consultative bodies were established in the NT. See National Museum of
mission societies vigorously attacked these revolutionary ideas, claiming them to be ‘communistic’.

In 1962, the Commonwealth Electoral Act provided Aborigines with the right to vote, but unlike other voters, they were not compelled to register. In the Northern Territory, where there were Aboriginal majorities in many ‘bush’ electorates, it was anticipated that the Black vote would be influential, but its impact was limited.\textsuperscript{39} The election of Hyacinth Tungutalum, the Territory’s first Aboriginal Assembly member in 1974, was a significant breakthrough but Aboriginal representation remained at one in the Assembly until 1995.\textsuperscript{40} It was not until the election of the Clare Martin Labor government in 2001 that Aboriginal representation in the Assembly began to resemble the proportion of the Aboriginal population. Although their numbers in the Assembly limited the influence of Aboriginal elected politicians, political activism was growing in other arenas.

Land rights became a national and urgent issue in the 1960s. Academics, the media, and some politicians recognised that acknowledgement of Aboriginal dispossession and disadvantage necessitated recognition and accommodation of their deep spiritual and material connection to their land. South Australia led the legislative response by passing \textit{The Aboriginals Lands Trust Act, 1966}, after a long campaign led by Don Dunstan.\textsuperscript{41} In the Territory, Aboriginal campaigners were forced to use different methods. In 1963, the Yolgnu people of Yirrkala petitioned the Australian parliament...


\textsuperscript{40} Tungutalum was elected as the Country Liberal Party member for the electorate of Arafura which encompassed Bathurst and Melville Island and part of the mainland. He held the seat until the 1977 election. See Appendix 7: Aboriginal Elected Members of the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly.

protesting the excision of their land to mine bauxite. In 1968, the Milirrpum v Nabalco case went to the Northern Territory Supreme Court where Mr Justice Blackburn invoked the (now discarded) myth of terra nullius to deny the claim. In the VRD, the Gurindji, led by Vincent Lingiari, walked off Vesteys-owned cattle stations in 1966 in support of the successful NAWU claim for equal wages, deferred until December 1968. The Gurindji camped at Wattie Creek, determined not to leave their land. When the Whitlam Labor Government was elected in 1972, the time was right to seriously address land rights. Whitlam appointed Justice Edward Woodward to enquire into Aboriginal land rights in 1973. His report resulted in the introduction of an Aboriginal Land Rights Bill in 1975 but it lapsed when the Whitlam government was dismissed. Before Labor’s demise, it successfully negotiated with Vesteys for the return of a portion of the Gurindji’s land with the settlement famously enacted by Lingiari and Whitlam in August 1975. Despite ambiguities and limitations, the Fraser coalition government passed the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, in June 1977. It created several Land Councils to represent the claims and rights of traditional Aboriginal owners and an Aboriginal Lands Commissioner to adjudicate upon claims. Land claims and ongoing court cases have been a part of the Northern Territory political landscape ever since.

Although (theoretically) the Aboriginal Land Rights (Northern Territory) Act 1976, has placed 43 percent of Territory land mass into Aboriginal control,\(^{42}\) it has not translated into any real autonomy. Aboriginal control of land is always conditional. A formula has developed that has resulted in lease back, or shared agreements, between Aboriginal owners and statutory authorities that ostensibly give Aborigines an ‘equal’ voice in management: Kakadu and Uluru national parks are prime examples. ‘The Intervention’, discussed previously and below, has severely eroded even this limited sense of autonomy. Nevertheless, land rights have given Aborigines a greater sense of confidence in what may happen on their own domain despite almost constant pressure and antagonism. The Northern Territory Country Liberal

Party government (CLP) fought land rights, and the Commonwealth-sponsored Aboriginal land councils, almost continuously from 1978 to 2001. In opposing sixteen land rights awards in the Federal and High Court, an ‘adversarial political culture’ developed between the Territory government, Aboriginal land councils and other peak Aboriginal organisations like the Aboriginal Medical Services Alliance of the Northern Territory. Federal High Court cases such as the 1992 Mabo and 1996 Wik decisions added to the momentum and complexity of land issues. This adversarial culture and the deep distrust that many Aboriginal people felt towards the CLP government was a critical factor in the defeat of the 1998 statehood referendum. ALP governments since 2001 have fared no better. Galarrwuy Yunupingu, former Chairman of the Northern Land Council and 1978 Australian of the Year, declared upon hearing renewed calls for statehood in 2003 that ‘the rallying cry of “Statehood!”’ has often been the first sound in the battle to defeat our rights’.

As a Territory, the Commonwealth has greater jurisdiction and the capacity to act directly in its affairs. As a result Territory Aborigines are constantly under pressure to understand and adapt to a continuously evolving federal regime of laws and legislation. The demands of these momentous human rights, political and legal struggles dominated the attention and resources of Aboriginal communities throughout the Territory. Despite the importance of external events, community life continued and sport was an important recreation and means of sustaining community cohesion and identity. The wider social and political context inevitably frames the erratic development of sport in regional and remote areas.

43 Tatz, ‘From Welfare to Treaty’, 13
46 Ibid., 5.
Aboriginal sportspeople who live in regional and remote areas are relegated to a marginal sporting experience by physical isolation, a lack of opportunity, sporting infrastructure and resources. The popularity and enthusiasm for sport in the bush has never translated into resources and support; talented athletes who wished to pursue their sporting ambitions have been forced to relocate to urban centres. Michael Long, a Norm Smith medallist, had first-hand experience. ‘Not so long ago the sense of isolation a young Aboriginal athlete would experience as he or she broke from the family to pursue a dream was profound and, in most instances, utterly defeating.’

The transition from community to urban life is fraught with complex obstacles. Aboriginal youths from remote communities often have only their talent and tenaciousness to rely on; few have completed primary school or even had access to secondary education. Unless provided with substantial support, the language and cultural issues are often overwhelming. Australian football is the only sport that claims any success in developing pathways for Aboriginal players from remote communities.

Success at AFL level for players from remote communities is rare. Gary Dhurrkay and Nathan Djerrkura from Yirrkala in Arnhemland are among the few who have played in the elite AFL. The opportunities of translating abundant talent into success are more common at the regional level in Darwin, Alice Springs or other regional leagues where issues of distance, homesickness, culture and weather are not as great.

Football gives opportunities to travel, live and work in ‘town’ and experience all it has to offer in a sporting and a social context very different from their home communities. Football is the exception, not the rule. Examples of Northern Territory athletes from remote communities succeeding at a senior national level in sports other than football are rare. Ivy Hampton and her sister Eileen Foster from McLaren Creek, just south of Tennant Creek, both represented Australia in darts in the 1980s. Wally McArthur and John Moriaty were both from Borroloola but

Tatz, et. al, AFL’s Black Stars, 8.

Tatz, Black Gold 78 & 80.

Ibid., 262.
tragically their sporting success was precipitated by their removal from their families and subsequent upbringing in interstate institutions. So too Gordon Briscoe, a representative soccer player, and, later, a respected academic. The success of McArthur in athletics and rugby league and Moriarty in soccer in the 1950s only illustrates that the gap between remote and urban sporting opportunities has widened.

**Future Pathways**

In recent years, football has taken the lead in attempting to redress the inequalities faced by Aborigines in remote communities. The AFLNT, the AFL’s peak body in the Northern Territory, has a well-established junior development program that includes a regional development framework to support local initiatives. An important part of the strategy are visits from AFL players who conduct training clinics that incorporate health messages. Gaining in reputation and stature are the Clontarf football academies. First established in 2000 in Western Australia, they are now being developed in the Territory. Clontarf uses football as a vehicle to develop the capacity of Aboriginal youths. Its academies take a holistic approach to student development, recognising that football is a key motivator. As valuable as these events and developing structures are, they are no substitute for permanent infrastructure and resources; while they may have an altruistic aspect, they are also self-serving in identifying AFL talent for major leagues. Nevertheless, it could be argued that the AFL is doing more than governments in encouraging and promoting sport participation and healthy lifestyles. Certainly, the AFL offers a model for other sports to diminish the sporting isolation of remote sports persons and in doing so improve their physical and emotional well-being. Australian football’s efforts to develop pathways for aspiring Territory footballers were further enhanced in June 2008 when, the AFLNT announced that a development team would enter the 2009 AFL Queensland competition.


Although other sports are not as advanced in their efforts to develop pathways for Territory sports, there are signs of greater integration into the Australian national sporting landscape. In recent years, there has been a shift in emphasis and resources to link local leagues with elite representative teams in national leagues and championships. In a globalised world of sports entertainment, the Northern Territory now fields teams in men’s and women’s hockey, netball, rugby league and rugby union.52

**Aboriginal All-Stars**

Although football is now portrayed as a vehicle of equal opportunity and reconciliation, its history is one of racism and exclusion. It is only since the 1990s that the ingrained racism in the game has been recognised and measures taken to eradicate it. In February 2009, the sixth Australian Aboriginal All-Stars football game, a showcase of Aboriginal football, was played at Darwin’s Marrara Stadium. Since 2003, the All-Star game has been a bi-annual fixture featuring not only the AFL’s Aboriginal stars but also the Northern Territory’s abundant football talent. The Aboriginal All-Stars games draw large crowds, particularly from remote Aboriginal communities, where football is embraced with extraordinary enthusiasm and passion. The game focuses the public and media attention on Aboriginal football and provides a platform to discuss broader Aboriginal issues.

The catalyst for the first All-Star game in 1994 was an incident involving St Kilda’s Aboriginal footballers, Nicky Winmar and Gilbert McAdam, and sections of the Collingwood crowd at Victoria Park who racially vilified them. Winmar defied the crowd’s racial taunts by raising his guernsey and proudly pointing to his Black skin. Collingwood President Allan McAlister’s response to the incident was to comment ‘As long as they [Aborigines] conduct themselves like white people, well, off the field, everyone will admire and respect them.’53 A public furore ensued that resulted

52 See Appendix 8: Northern Territory Teams in National Leagues.
in the inaugural All-Stars game in Darwin as a gesture of reconciliation. Thirteen of the twenty-four man All-Stars team selected were Territory players who were accorded great ‘home town’ support from the near-capacity crowd. The All-Stars game is embraced in the Northern Territory because it sustains a strong sense of Aboriginal ‘ownership’ of football. Although the All-Stars game was a great public and financial success, it did not end racism in the AFL. In 1995, racism again burst into public view when Michael Long took a complaint of racial abuse against Collingwood’s Damien Monkhurst to the AFL administration. The resultant public debate and internal AFL introspection resulted in the introduction of a racial vilification rule. Gardiner argues that the public debate and AFL’s codification of racial vilification rules is an important marker in Australian race relations. In a statement that harks back to Darwin’s first Aboriginal footballers and the colour bars of the 1920s and 1930s, ‘In speaking back they [Aboriginal footballers] have therefore created a contested space, and this arena of contest relates to and feeds into a broader contest of ideas about country and history, identity and ownership.’

The positive benefits of the All-Stars game are also demonstrated on a local level in the NTFL and regional leagues. In the 2006–07 NTFL the Tiwi Bombers, effectively a representative ‘All-Stars’ team from the Tiwi Islands Football League, was preparing for its first full season in the NTFL. The Bombers reached the finals of the competition and reinvigorated interest in the NTFL and other communities have had the same effect on regional football competitions around the Northern Territory.

Football is a ‘beacon’ in Aboriginal communities. Its central role in community life throughout the Northern Territory cannot be overestimated and should be viewed as

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56 Ibid., 43.
57 The Tiwi Bombers entered the NTFL on a ‘trial’ basis playing the first seven games of the 2006–07 NTFL season. They were admitted to the NTFL as its eighth team for the 200708 season.
a key indicator of community capacity. ‘The community has enormous pride in its football team. The team carries the hopes and aspirations of the community, and a successful footy team builds a sense of commonality over and above tribal differences.’ Until recent years, the football competitions of Katherine, Tennant Creek, and Alice Springs reflected the decline in football in regional areas around Australia. Throughout the Territory, football is going through something of a renaissance, led by representative teams from its remote communities. It is a sad and tragic juxtaposition that the very same communities labelled ‘dysfunctional’ by the ‘Intervention’ can organise the people and resources to field a football team in regional competitions that often require weekly round trips of hundreds of kilometres to play.

Sport in Community Life

Many Aboriginal communities are artifices, invented communities, not places of original habitat. As a result of Commonwealth welfare policies, there is almost no real economy, enormous disadvantage in all areas of health, fractured education, no sponsors and almost no government assistance for sport. Sport is one of the few positive social forces that provides a rare sense of social cohesion. Outside the urban centres, sport is almost exclusively an Aboriginal domain. Now, as in the nineteenth century, the only significant White sporting activities are bush horserace meetings. Although sport is enormously popular in communities, regular sporting competitions are spasmodic because of the lack of resources and infrastructure. Football is often the only sport with enough interest and support to sustain regular local leagues. As irregular and erratic as sport may be, its very existence is an important statement of survival. In 1995, Colin Tatz wrote in Obstacle Race, ‘sport

58 Neil Murray, quoted in Marlow, Centre Bounce, 14.
59 See Appendix 9: Northern Territory Regional Football Leagues.
60 30.4 percent of the Territory’s growing population is Aboriginal, proportionally the largest in Australia. Outside the major urban centres, 75.6 percent is Aboriginal. See the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs, Report of the NTER Review Board, 19.
can, and does have more important functions in Aboriginal societies than it does in the lives of other Australians.\textsuperscript{61} He advocated how and why sport can play a beneficial role in the social and mental well-being in Aboriginal communities. In 2001, his Aboriginal Suicide is Different updated and reiterated his arguments, supported by research, indicating that where active sports competitions existed juvenile delinquency declined and suicidal behaviours were reduced.\textsuperscript{62} Since 1961, Tatz has been advocating all levels of government to pay greater attention to sport in Aboriginal communities and to provide infrastructure and resources.

Ted Egan, Northern Territory Administrator from October 2003 to October 2007, also recognised the power of sport as a motivating and unifying force in the community. As a founder of the St Marys Football Club, a member of the Northern Territory’s first representative team (basketball), patrol officer, reserve superintendent, teacher and district officer with the Department of Aboriginal Affairs, his experience in Territory sport is unparalleled. Although he has described Aboriginal society as being in a ‘deep malaise’,\textsuperscript{63} he has nominated football as one of the few positive forces. ‘Aussie Rules … is the only meaningful thing in their lives. They love it. They are good at it.’\textsuperscript{64} He proposed a scheme whereby Aboriginal communities, in collaboration with volunteers, would erect grandstands on community ovals in a similar way that Amish communities unite to raise a new barn.\textsuperscript{65} Egan argued that such projects would motivate and inspire people with a sense of achievement by demonstrating the value of their own investment and labour. Paradoxically, although it is common to perceive sport as a positive influence in Aboriginal communities, and powerful advocates such as Tatz and Egan have argued

\textsuperscript{61} Tatz, Obstacle Race, 315.
\textsuperscript{62} Colin Tatz, Aboriginal Suicide is Different: A portrait of Life and Self-Destruction (Canberra: Aboriginal Studies Press, 2001), 152.
\textsuperscript{64} Ted Egan, ‘Raising the Barn’ (Darwin: unpublished manuscript, 2005), 2. See also, Egan, Due Inheritance, 100.
\textsuperscript{65} Egan refers to the film Witness as his example and suggest that the grandstand would be built over a week.
for improved and targeted resources for sport, it is largely ignored by government and attracts no meaningful policy response.

In 2005, the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly established a Sessional Committee on Sport and Youth to inquire into, and report on, sport programs for the Territory’s youth. Its terms of reference included an examination of ‘demonstrated links between participation in sport and reduced antisocial behaviour.’ Typically, as is too often the case in Aboriginal policy development, the committee expended three years and vital resources to confirm what is already acknowledged by the Northern Territory government — that Aborigines are amongst the most disadvantaged,

have poorer health outcomes, are less likely to succeed in school, are less likely to be employed and are far more likely to be the victims or perpetrators of crime. Furthermore, Indigenous children are over-represented as victims of child abuse and neglect. The committee has yet to release its findings but sport alone is not a panacea for despair and appalling neglect. All levels of government steadfastly refuse to understand the role of sport in communities. It is neither treated seriously or as part of their mandate. Although Federal and Territory governments have committed to ‘Closing the Gap on Indigenous Disadvantage’ they have failed to adopt the radical reform of the bureaucratic machinery and service delivery required. Sport, leisure and recreation are essential to ‘closing the gap’ and should be part of integrated and holistic approaches to social and physical wellbeing. Instead, it remains on the policy periphery, an after school or Saturday afternoon activity, in ubiquitous, poorly

66 Legislative Assembly of the Northern Territory, Sessional Committee on Sport and Youth, http://www.nt.gov.au/lant/parliament/committees/Sport%20and%20Youth/1-Terms%20of%20Reference.pdf [25 July 2008]. The two other terms of reference were to consider. (a) the ability and effectiveness of existing structures and programs, from grassroots to elite, to deliver in urban, regional and remote areas, and recommendations for improvement; (b) the role and benefit of School Sport NT programs and links to participation;
targeted and under-resourced ‘sport and recreation’ programs with no specific health, education, social or emotional outcomes.\textsuperscript{68}

\textbf{The ‘Intervention’}

On 21 June 2007 the Commonwealth Government announced the ‘National Emergency Response to Protect Aboriginal Children in the Northern Territory.’\textsuperscript{69} The Liberal National coalition government under Prime Minster John Howard claimed to be acting in response to the Northern Territory Government’s ‘Little Children are Sacred’ report and the dysfunction of some Aboriginal communities.\textsuperscript{70} The Commonwealth felt compelled to intervene because ‘we do not think the Territory has responded to the crisis affecting the children in the Territory.’\textsuperscript{71} Parliament passed a package of legislation, including the \textit{Northern Territory National Emergency Response Act 2007} on 17 August 2007. The legislation suspended the \textit{Racial Discrimination Act 1975} and invoked ‘special measures’\textsuperscript{72} to facilitate the emergency response in ‘prescribed areas’, effectively segregating the Northern Territory.\textsuperscript{73} If ever there was any autonomy or sovereignty on Aboriginal land, it has been suspended. The so-called ‘Intervention’ is an acknowledgement of the legacy of failure of all governments, past and present, to govern for all. Racism lies at the heart of this failure.

The Intervention polarised political and public opinion. Marion Scrymgour was one of six Aboriginal members of the Labor Territory Cabinet and Minister for Natural

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\textsuperscript{69} Northern Territory Emergency Response (NTER)
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Resources Environment and the Arts at the time. Her election and rise to become the first Aboriginal female cabinet member in Australia illustrates the political and social progress since the 1953 Welfare Ordinance. She described the National Emergency Response as ‘a second intervention’. The speech was dedicated to the memory of her father, a member of the ‘Stolen Generation’ interred in the Alice Springs Bungalow in the 1920s, who had died just weeks before:

… the values and principles which motivated the Commonwealth in its first intervention in 1911, continue to motivate the Commonwealth’s response to Aboriginal people 96 years on. … It is as if the second intervention has given the Commonwealth permission to enact a great undoing of our lives. Aboriginal Territorians are being herded back to the primitivism of assimilation and the days of native welfare.74

Scrymgour’s speech voiced the frustration felt by many who doubted the motivation and sincerity of the ‘Intervention’ and felt powerless in the face of a federal policy and media juggernaut that seemed intent on misrepresenting and ‘re-inventing’ Northern Territory history.75 Alison Anderson, another of the Aboriginal Legislative Assembly members,76 saw the Intervention differently. ‘My people need real protection … my people need the help and want help from this intervention.’77

Seventeen months after the Intervention, community views remained deeply divided. The NTER Review Board found that there was ‘widespread hostility’ amongst Aboriginal people subject to the intervention. Informants had

75 Ibid., 6 of 15.
76 Member for MacDonnell in Central Australia, in the Western Desert West of Alice Springs.
opened their hearts revealing their grief, anger, stories of trauma, placing the Intervention as an episode with the longer history of their communities. People spoke about … how shocked they were by an Intervention that approached them as though they were alien and repugnant to the rest of the country. How they were singled out for special treatment.78

In its response to the recommendations of the ‘Report of the NTER Review Board’, the Rudd Labor Government announced that although it would consult more closely with Aboriginal communities, it would not lift the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975. 79 It is not difficult to see how some view the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and implementation of ‘special measures’80 as reminiscent of the controls over Black life so pervasive during the eras of Aboriginals Ordinances.

The Intervention has vividly illustrated how Aboriginal people and communities can be easily isolated and treated as a people and world apart. In such an environment, many ask how ‘normal’ life can continue. Sport is one of the few community institutions resilient enough to survive and act as a positive force amidst high levels of dysfunction and negativity. Media images of the arrival of the Intervention in a remote community often show Australian Defence Force personnel or medical personnel kicking footballs with children to break the ice. In remote communities across the Territory, experiences similar to those of the Milingimbi grand final demonstrate how sport sustains and reinforces community bonds and identity.

Community Sports Festivals

In April 2008, I observed first hand the important role sport plays in maintaining a sense of normality within the community at a time of anxiety and disruption. It was in the midst of the federal ‘Intervention’ when I was visiting Milingimbi to conduct oral history interviews in an attempt to trace the origins of western sport into remote Aboriginal communities.\(^81\) The timing was chosen to coincide with the Milingimbi Football League grand final because I was advised it would attract many people from around northern Arnhem Land. Milingimbi, established in 1923 as a Methodist mission, is an island community of approximately 1000 people just off the Arnhem Land coast. Coincidently, ‘Intervention’ officials also arrived during the week. The ‘Intervention’ was not well understood by local people and there was considerable uncertainty and scepticism about its aims. I was asked by a senior community member, ‘Why do Balanda keep asking us what we want when they never listen to our answers? We built this community with our own hands, we can do anything.’\(^82\) The Commonwealth officials flew out of the community to return to Darwin on Friday, oblivious to the fact that they were missing a prime example of the community’s social capital and capacity.

The following day the entire community gathered around the picturesque football ground situated adjacent to a tamarind grove and an old Macassan well. The oval fence, cars and spectators were bedecked in the colours of their teams. The teams, formed according to clan group affiliations, included players young and old. There was a sense of great anticipation and occasion that encompassed the whole community. The exciting game was closely fought and the exuberant crowd cheered wildly throughout. At the conclusion of the game, both teams were engulfed in celebration by spectators. The trophy presentation was an anticlimax by comparison. The entire day was one of celebration, theatre and pride.


\(^82\) Reverend Joe Marunydiil, personal communication with the author, 8 April 2008. Balanda is the Yolngu word for Hollander, or White man.
The carnival atmosphere of Milingimbi’s grand final is recreated in remote Aboriginal communities throughout the Territory where the major annual event is their football grand final or ‘sports and culture’ festival. The scale of these events varies according to the size and location of the community. Some, such as the Yuendumu Sports and the Barunga Sports and Culture festival, have developed a national reputation while others are much smaller affairs. The size of the event does not reflect its symbolic importance. Similar to rituals and ceremonies of the past, which enabled large groups to gather to reaffirm relationships and transact important ceremonial business, these festivals bring people together from far afield. The sports and culture festivals are one of the few locally devised and run events where sporting and other resources and amenities are often absent, or rudimentary at best. During the day, sport reigns supreme but at night music and dance take precedence. The atmosphere is one of fun, festival, family and kinship.

Aboriginal community sport and culture events exemplify the potential and capacity of people in control of their own affairs. The sovereignty and success exhibited at such events stand in stark contrast to the ambivalence and subjugation of so many imposed government projects. It begs the question of how and why sport can motivate and inspire so many in places where such social, health and economic disadvantages exist. It raises important questions regarding personal and community priorities, work, recreation and motivation. Why is the dedication and enthusiasm devoted to sport so rarely reproduced in other areas of community endeavour? Why do communities choose to invest scarce community resources in sport but not other, seemingly worthy community projects? Sport, and football in particular, along with Aboriginal art, are among the few Aboriginal ‘success’ stories, but they cannot camouflage the dire plight and under-resourcing of communities that are in a state of perpetual crisis.
Conclusion

In the Northern Territory sport was, and remains, an important social barometer. In the contact zones, sport was an important means of contesting and negotiating social and political tension and conflict. Sport played a central but paradoxical role in a complex web of accommodation and resistance that formed and transformed the social landscape. It was a symbolic social space that connected, or excluded, individuals and/or groups within and between racial groups. Sport was an ephemeral contradictory zone that acted both as bulwark to social hegemonies and as a battleground to challenge and resist social control.

Initially, during the South Australian administration, it was a conservative force. Its traditions and rituals made it an essential component in relocating, reconstructing and maintaining a British White society in South Australia’s Northern Territory — which necessitated the exclusion or control of non-White participation. Then, during the Commonwealth administration, it became a transformative force in challenging the ‘pervasive racial caste barriers’ of the colonial era.1 The Coloured and multicultural community embraced it as a means of creating a more inclusive and representative society between the World Wars. Following World War II, Aborigines used sport as a vehicle to challenge and subvert racial social barriers, often in advance of formal political recognition or legislative change.

This study began with two main aims. First, to construct a narrative overview of the development of sport in the Northern Territory from 1869 to 1953. Second, to use sport as a lens to analyse issues of race and identity in Territory society in accordance with Hall’s contention that sport ‘simultaneously serves to both challenge and confirm racial ideologies’.2 It proved a rare opportunity to document the history of Territory sport from 1869 to 1916, particularly recognising that it is a critical social agent deeply embedded in the popular imagination. The experience has greatly

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1 Broome, ‘Professional Aboriginal Boxers’, 53.
enhanced my knowledge of Territory history and reinforced my belief that sport provides a crucial lens to its understanding. Although there was abundant evidence to support Hall’s contention, it was a challenging task to develop a narrative that did justice to a remarkable history, which acknowledged multiple, and often contradictory perspectives, revealed unexpected discoveries, and reinterpreted well-worn themes.

Arthur Marwick’s analytical framework, adopted from The Sixties, consisted of four principal components: major forces and constraints, events, human agencies, and convergences and contingencies. The most significant major force influencing the Northern Territory was its distinctive physical and social environment that differentiated it from southern Australia: an extreme tropical climate, harsh physical environment, its remoteness and its diverse population. Until the turn of the twentieth century, an Aboriginal and Chinese majority outnumbered a small White minority. Although the Chinese population declined after 1900, the Aboriginal population remained a majority until the late 1940s, and today comprises thirty percent of the population. Consequently, I argue that the small White minority set aside the social, economic, religious and class differences that defined and differentiated many other Australian colonial societies, and adopted an approach that delineated and distanced a White ‘us’ from an alien, coloured ‘them’. In the virtual absence of an educated middle class intelligentsia, which in other Australian colonies would have formed charitable or liberal humanitarian organisations that may have ameliorated the excesses of racism towards Aborigines or other ‘aliens’, racial attitudes were often extreme, insular and therefore resistant to distant ‘outside’ influences. Economic development, initially stimulated by the construction of the Overland Telegraph between 1870 and August 1872, was erratic, rarely profitable, and always precarious until World War II. Considering Marwick’s view that when considering the structural themes of geography, economy and technology ‘favourable trends in any

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3 Marwick, The Sixties, 23.
4 Wells, et. al., Modern Frontier, Appendix A, Table 1, 184 & Table 17, 200. According to the population data, the Northern Territory European population exceeded the Aboriginal population for the first time between 1947 and 1954.
of these areas will promote change; a low level of technology or a backward economy will be likely to inhibit change,\textsuperscript{5} the Northern Territory can only be described as ‘inhibited’.

The continuous inter-relationship between Arthur Marwick’s major forces and constraints sub-categories of ‘ideology’ and ‘structural’ are central in understanding Northern Territory history and society. The political and social ideology that underpinned White settlement was the same as that which drove British imperialism throughout the world. The diversity and demographics of the Territory and northern Australia meant that race relations were always a fundamental social and political issue. Consequently, in considering Marwick’s principal components of convergences and contingencies, issues such as cultural exchange, racial boundaries, social and demographic change, civil rights, resistance and conservatism were of central importance throughout the study.

In the ‘Age of Empire’, British colonists were intent on recreating British societies across the world. It was underpinned by a racial ideology informed by Social Darwinism that fed an ‘increasingly xenophobic Victorian age’,\textsuperscript{6} one that viewed Aborigines as either ‘savages’ who obstructed ‘progress’ and civilisation, and therefore had to be ‘dispersed’ or ‘removed’ from the land, or a race ‘doomed to extinction’,\textsuperscript{7} and in need of ‘protection’. The result was the same: Aboriginal rights were ignored. Racist sentiment also dictated that the lives of Chinese and other Southeast Asian ‘aliens’ should be subject to restriction and control. The advent of Commonwealth control in 1911, guided by the White Australia policy, resulted in racist colonial practices being enshrined in legislation. It instituted an administrative regime that attempted racial segregation and the imposition of greater restrictions, surveillance, and control over the Aboriginal, Asian and Coloured populations. As legislative and administrative pressure to segregate the community grew, so too did

\textsuperscript{5} Marwick, The Sixties, 24.
\textsuperscript{6} Ryan, The Making of New Zealand Cricket, 9.
\textsuperscript{7} Report of the Select Committee of the Legislative Council, Upon ‘the aborigines’, 165/SAPP, Adelaide, 1860, 5.
social and political resistance. From World War I until 1953, new allegiances and interdependent relationships developed between unions and the Coloured and Asian communities to resist discrimination and fight for their rights.

The final principal component of Marwick’s contextual framework is human agencies. During the South Australian administration, colonial power relationships dictated that Whites manipulated and monopolised power. Consequently, Aborigines and ‘others’ were continually marginalised by White settler society and compelled to adapt and to survive. Palmerston’s small White society adopted its own hierarchy, led by the Government Resident, the civil service, White merchants and the BAT. On the frontier, White pastoralists, police and ‘practical bushmen’ colluded to create a society largely beyond the reach of the South Australian administration that sanctioned violence to quell Black resistance to White expansion. Although some regions like Arnhem Land remained beyond White settlement, fierce and determined Aboriginal resistance inevitably succumbed to declining natural resources, superior White arms and infrastructure. Aborigines were compelled to ‘come in’ to White pastoral properties or settlements to avoid the threat of violent death, or slow starvation in exchange for the relative security of a life of poverty and oppression.

World War I prompted radical social change in Darwin and a realignment of colonial power structures. Between the two World Wars, the union movement was an important catalyst in the political shift from race to class, particularly after 1928. This occurred when the Commonwealth’s Aboriginal policy in the Territory, administered by Dr Cecil Cook, considered the growing Coloured population as a threat, resulting in extreme policies designed to ‘breed the colour out’. These conflicting forces clashed throughout the 1920s and 1930s. The Coloured community, in association with the unions, began to assert itself both politically and socially, and became an important agency for change, accelerated by World War II. The imperatives of war resulted in many Aborigines experiencing greater rights and a sense that change was possible. They learned the value of their labour and, in collaboration with the unions, they began to exert their industrial rights. The

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8 The Northern Standard, 9 June 1933.
emergence of the United Nations and the Declaration of Human Rights following World War II accelerated the shift in Commonwealth Aboriginal affairs, begun prior to the war, from ‘protection’ to ‘assimilation’. This shift in Commonwealth policy coincided with parallel political campaigns by Aborigines for greater industrial rights and the Coloured communities’ push for citizenship, which resulted in the 1953 Welfare Ordinance and the end of the Aboriginals Ordinance. Although this ‘liberated’ the Coloured community from the Ordinance, Aborigines remained under rigid Commonwealth control as wards of the state.

The Northern Territory has rarely been the central focus of sports historians. My study, allied to that of Susannah Ritchie, begins to redress this neglect. It should be read in association with recent histories by Reynolds, Ganter, Martinez and Stephenson that challenge conventional White settler history by exploring the complex inter-relationships between White, Aboriginal and Asian populations. We need to develop a more nuanced understanding of northern society characterised by hybridisation, accommodation and adaption. Sport is an essential part of the alternative hybrid archival repertoire that provides an important counter-narrative of survival and resistance and ‘protest against the “hygiene” of the White story-telling tradition’. Sport enhances and augments our understanding of how these complex interrelationships converged and developed. This is particularly so in Darwin where Australian football became an important vehicle for a ‘hybrid’, multi-racial population to assert itself, to challenge and resist racial stereotypes and to forge a new identity. Built upon a strong oral tradition, this identity developed a seductive, but imperfect football myth that bequeathed ‘ownership’ of football to the Coloured community and preferred a narrative of survival, resistance and the eventual triumph of Darwin’s multiracial community. But in the process it omitted important characters and events. By drawing upon diverse sources, challenging the conventional White history, challenging myths, interrogating the social memory, and highlighting dialectical contradictions, new perspectives and interpretations emerge that open the way for further research.

9 Stephenson, The Outsiders Within, 98.
The scope and time parameters of the study necessitated a broad approach that resulted in many interesting and fruitful research opportunities only being partially explored. As the study developed and priorities changed, many research themes were pursued and then reluctantly put aside. In the process, a vast and diverse range of source material was identified, suggesting that continued research would yield further discoveries. There are many avenues for detailed studies of the role of sport in constructing, sustaining and changing northern society. Focused studies of the Chinese, Malay, Filipino, Japanese and other immigrant communities would further illuminate the diversity and complexity of race relations in northern Australia.

Similarly, detailed case studies of women in sport, trade unions in sport, individual sports and/or regions would reveal a greater understanding of the interrelationships and interdependencies of racial, gender and cultural groups within the community. This study has revealed previously unknown sportsmen like Bismark and Willie Allen, which suggest that there are many other stories yet to be told. Eric Hayward’s *No Free Kicks* is a fine example of how sport, family and social history are entwined.\(^{10}\) It is remarkable that no similar histories have been written about the Northern Territory’s sporting families.

Another key research focus that offers Social Science researchers great potential for an interdisciplinary approach is the relationships between social organisation, ritual, kinship and sport in Aboriginal communities. Tatz\(^{11}\) and Frawley\(^{12}\) have identified that sport plays a significant and distinctive role in Aboriginal community social and cultural life but further detailed research is essential. Remote Aboriginal communities like Yuendumu, Barunga, Yirrkala or Wadeye all offer researchers opportunities to trace sport from pre-history, through White contact to contemporary community life, while also following developments in Aboriginal policy and

\(^{10}\) Eric Hayward, *No Free Kicks: Family, Community and Football: A Noongar Story* (Fremantle: Fremantle Arts Centre Press, 2006).

\(^{11}\) Tatz, *Obstacle Race*, 315.

\(^{12}\) Frawley, ‘More Than Game’.
practice. The study of the origin, nature and organisation of Aboriginal sports and sports carnivals could reveal important understandings of community motivations, social capital and capacity building that could have important implications for government programs and community development.

A consequence of the broad approach taken in the study is that the contribution and involvement of women in sport is overshadowed by that of men. In simple terms, this reflects the demographic reality of Territory White society where women were a minority. It is acknowledged that this study reflects the male bias of the source material, which often trivialised or ignored women’s sport. A history of women in Territory sport would reveal a great deal about Territory society in general and the changing role and status of women in different periods. An even greater research challenge would be a study of non-White female participation in sport. The liberation of ‘Coloured’ women would make for a fascinating insight into race, gender and sport. This group, perhaps more than any other, has been marginalised. Consequently, it is largely invisible here because of their apparent ‘absence’ in the source material until after World War II. It is likely that detailed research would reveal evidence that will enable valuable new perspectives and insights into the dynamics of Territory society and sport.

The study’s scope has meant that it was unable to include the whole of the Northern Territory beyond the colonial period. There remains a green field of opportunity for researchers to examine local and regional histories across the Territory. A history of sport in Alice Springs, only touched upon briefly here, would provide an important comparison and counterpoint to the development of sport in Darwin and the Top End. A comparative analysis of the development of football in Alice Springs and Darwin would give important insights into race relations across the Territory. There

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13 National Library of Australia / Australian Sports Commission, Sports Oral History Project. This project recorded pre-White contact traditional games from Maningrida, Wadeye and Yuendumu. The potential to record the history of the initial introduction of Western sports and games to former Commonwealth settlements remains because this generally occurred post World War II.
appears to be a sharp difference between Top End and Centralian football, with the latter very much more prone to racial antagonisms, on and off the field.

Sport on the frontier, considered in the colonial context in this study, also offers a rich field of unexplored research terrain that would give new insights into outback Australia past and present. In the Northern Territory, where frontier conflict prevailed longer than other regions, the evolution of bush sports would provide a window into Black–White relations on pastoral stations. There is also a multitude of new issues on the frontier such as mining, the environment, and the inequity between urban, regional and remote Australia. Sport offers a valuable means of monitoring and analysing how the frontier and the outback continue to influence Australian culture and identity. Just as the frontier attitudes of colonial Northern Territory permeated and influenced colonial White society of Palmerston and the northern goldfields, the frontier remains an important influence on contemporary politics. ‘The Intervention’, and the way it has ‘excised’ remote Aboriginal communities, is just the latest example of how remote Australia remains on the frontier — a world apart.

Hephzibah Menuhin, musician and human rights campaigner, argued that the greatest test of a nation’s civility and civilisation is the manner in which it treats its most underprivileged minority.14 On almost any indicator, Australian Aborigines are the most disadvantaged minority in Australia.15 In the Northern Territory, ‘The Intervention’, the suspension of the Racial Discrimination Act 1975 and the imposition of ‘special measures’,16 all indicate that the state of civility and civilisation in remote and regional areas is calamitous. Despite the Rudd Labor Government’s formal apology in 2008, there are few signs that life in remote

14 Colin Tatz, Genocide in Australia [Research Discussion Paper No. 8] (Canberra: Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies, 1999), 1.
Aboriginal communities has improved and there are those who feel that there is a return to the “‘bad old days’, of complete government control over their lives’. Beyond the main urban centres, it is clear that oppression, bigotry and discrimination remain. In this environment, the question must be asked: how can sport survive?

Although I argue here that ‘normal’ sport cannot exist in an abnormal society, sport in remote communities is remarkably resilient and continues to bring people hope, joy and pride. Participation in sports festivals, or the success in regional football leagues, does give communities a temporary morale boost but it is no substitute for real change, sporting amenities, education or health infrastructure. Although sport is one of the few social institutions with the resilience to survive amidst the malaise that engulfs many remote communities, its continued survival is precarious. Individual success is similarly ephemeral. Invariably it leads to the individual leaving his or her community for greater opportunities in Alice Springs, Darwin or beyond, denying communities of much needed social capital. Sadly, rare successes on a local, regional or national level are not indicative of a general improvement in health, education or even sporting ability, but aberrations. A talented individual or a momentarily well-resourced or organised team only serves to disguise and distract people from the profound chasm of disadvantage that separates remote Aboriginal people from urban Australia.

The study extends the knowledge and understanding of sport in Australia by extending its horizons northwards and to its centre. The nature, scale and dynamic of Northern Territory White settler society, like its environment, tended to extremes. The small White population accepted racial conflict, prejudice and discrimination as part of northern life on and off the sports field. Despite the efforts of the White minority to exclude non-White participation, they were only ever partially successful. Aborigines were ever-present at sporting events, even when their participation was strictly controlled. The role of sport in general, and football in

particular, in defining the identity of the Northern Territory is indelibly printed in the social memory. After the turn of the century, Aboriginal, Chinese and other non-White sportsmen were central protagonists in recasting and redefining Darwin and Territory identity.

After 1911, socio-political change and demographics forced a recasting of Territory society that slowly shifted the emphasis and allegiances from race to class and identification with the local community. Although the Commonwealth administration instituted a legal and administrative regime of racial segregation, control and surveillance, its effects were limited beyond the confines of Darwin and Alice Springs. While only a small town by Australian standards, Darwin was a volatile microcosm of the social and political forces that buffeted Australia and the world during, and between, the World Wars. In such a small town, with so few amenities or entertainments, sport was the most public and overt arena to resist and challenge racism and oppressive government policies. As White society became more fractured, social boundaries became more flexible. Coloured athletes were initially accommodated and then rejected, before finally negotiating a compromise between the Wars that resulted in their becoming a dominant force in Darwin sport. Following World War II, a similar process occurred that allowed the converging interests of the union movement and the Black community to recast social and political boundaries anew, permitting the integration of Black footballers into the NTFL.

An important touchstone was Tatz’s 1995 characterisation of life and sport for Aborigines in Australia’s history as an ‘obstacle race’ that ‘explains how many could not then, and cannot even now, get to the starting line.’ The obstacles of poverty, oppression, bigotry and discrimination that confronted non-White participation in sport in the Northern Territory were not different from those experienced in other parts of Australia. But it is argued that the social, political and physical environment meant that they were more extreme and prolonged than other colonies/states. Although sport’s importance in the battle for human rights should not be overstated,

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18 Tatz, Obstacle Race, 29.
nor should its influence be ignored. By publicly challenging White dominance on the sports field, non-White athletes demonstrated a determination to resist racial stereotypes. Despite oppressive government regimes designed to segregate, discriminate and even breed them out of existence, the sports field gave them a stage to continual opportunities to celebrate their survival, resistance and talent.
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Appendices
## Appendix 1A: Development of Sports Clubs 1870–1911; Northern Territory Athletics / Cycling Clubs.

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Appendix 1B: Development of Sports Clubs 1870–1911; Northern Territory Cricket Clubs.

Table 2: 1870–1911; Northern Territory Cricket Clubs

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Appendix 1C: Development of Sports Clubs 1870–1911; Northern Territory Horseracing Clubs.

Table 3: Northern Territory Horseracing Clubs 1870–1911

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Appendix 1D: Development of Sports Clubs 1870–1911; Northern Territory Rifle / Gun Clubs.

Table 4: Northern Territory Rifle / Gun Clubs 1870–1911

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Appendix 2: Northern Territory Horserace Meetings 1869–1918.

Northern goldfields region / Top End includes; Palmerston, Southport, Sandy Creek, Yam Creek (Also known as Burrundie), The Union, Pine Creek, Port Darwin Camp, Katherine, Adelaide River, Fountain Head, Wandi, Glencoe, Brocks Creek.

Gulf Region (Barkly) includes; Borroloola, Corrella Station, Brunette Downs, Tenant Creek, Roper,

Central Australia includes; Stuart (Alice Springs), Arltunga.

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<th>Date of Race Meeting</th>
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<td>1873</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
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<td>14 April 1873.</td>
<td>14 July 1873 South Australian Advertiser</td>
<td>First race meeting in Northern Territory.</td>
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<td>Southport</td>
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<td>25 December 1873.</td>
<td>9 January 1874.</td>
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<td>1874</td>
<td>Sandy Creek</td>
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<td>1875</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>27 December 1875.</td>
<td>8 January 1876.</td>
<td>Coolie races as part of athletics on same program</td>
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<td>1876</td>
<td>Yam Creek</td>
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<td>1877</td>
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<td>21 April 1877</td>
<td>21 April 1877</td>
<td>Advertisement of match race Fannie bay</td>
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<td>The Union</td>
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<td>24 May 1877</td>
<td>9 June 1877</td>
<td>Chinese trial stakes for Chinese ‘Jocks’.</td>
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<td>MacDonnell Range Turf Club.</td>
<td>29 January 1881. Check</td>
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<td>1880 report states that it is the clubs 3rd meeting.</td>
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<td>On beach at Fannie Bay.</td>
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<td>29 January 1881.</td>
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<td>Report in 1880 indicates it is 3rd meeting</td>
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<td>Port Darwin Camp</td>
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<td>Grandstand built on course.</td>
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<td>25 March 1882. Adelaide Observer.</td>
<td>Postponed from Xmas due to extreme dry weather.</td>
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<td>1,2 January 1886</td>
<td>9 January 1886.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Port Darwin Camp</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>6 July 1886.</td>
<td>10 July 1886.</td>
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</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>19 February 1887</td>
<td>19 February 1887. North Australian.</td>
<td>No races were held due to lack of nominations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>10 February 1887</td>
<td>12 February 1887.</td>
<td>Match race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine River Turf</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 June 1887.</td>
<td>First reference to KRTC.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
<td>Reference (Northern Territory Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
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<tr>
<td>1887</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>5 August 1887</td>
<td>6 August 1887.</td>
<td>Chinaman’s race. C. Flannigan, ‘Coloured’ Jockey won the Palmerston Cup. (Flannigan executed for murder. 14 July 1893.)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>28 December 1887</td>
<td>31 December 1887. North Australian.</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>4 August 1888</td>
<td>11 August 1888. North Australian.</td>
<td>‘Special’ train provided. Races attended by ‘heathen Chinese, the slaves of Hindustan, and the dusky Aboriginal.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Burrundie Races, Yam Creek.</td>
<td>BTC</td>
<td>31 August 1888</td>
<td>1 September 1888. North Australian.</td>
<td>First annual races.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
<td>Reference (Northern Territory Times unless stated)</td>
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<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>31 December 1888.</td>
<td>5 January 1889. North Australian.</td>
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<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1889.</td>
<td>27 December 1889.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Roper Bar</td>
<td></td>
<td>25 December 1889.</td>
<td>17 January 1890.</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26, 27, 28 December 1889.</td>
<td>31 January 1890. Port Augusta Despatch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>8 August 1890.</td>
<td>15 August 1890.</td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1890.</td>
<td>9 February 1891.</td>
<td>Chinese Flutter.</td>
</tr>
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<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1890.</td>
<td>30 January 1891. Port Augusta Despatch</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>25 May 1891.</td>
<td>29 May 1891.</td>
<td>Fourth annual races.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>25 June 1891.</td>
<td>26 May 1891.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Tablelands Races</td>
<td></td>
<td>30 July 1891.</td>
<td>11 September 1891. Brunette Downs. ‘Black boys’ race.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>7 August 1891.</td>
<td>14 August</td>
<td>Ninth annual races.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>12 December 1891.</td>
<td>25 December 1891. Port Augusta Despatch</td>
<td>Match race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1891.</td>
<td>1 January 1892.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1891.</td>
<td>22 January 1892. Port Augusta Despatch</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>24 May 1892.</td>
<td>10 June 1892.</td>
<td>New grandstand erected on course. Numerous ‘blackboy’ jockeys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>20 June 1892.</td>
<td>24 June 1892.</td>
<td>Course built between Pine Creek and The union. 2 Chinese race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>5, 6 August 1892.</td>
<td>12 August 1892.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26, 27, 28 December 1891.</td>
<td>8 December 1892. Port Augusta Despatch</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1892.</td>
<td>30 December 1892.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>24 May 1893.</td>
<td>26 May 1893.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>4 July 1893.</td>
<td>7 July 1893.</td>
<td>Chinese race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td>MRJC</td>
<td>10, 11 July 1893.</td>
<td>11 August 1893.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1893</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>4 August 1893.</td>
<td>11 August 1893.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December</td>
<td>24 February 1894.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
<td>Reference (Northern Territory Times unless stated)</td>
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<td>1893</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1893.</td>
<td>19 January 1894.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Fountain Head</td>
<td>1 January 1894.</td>
<td>5 January 1894.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1894.</td>
<td>5 January 1894.</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>24 May 1894.</td>
<td>1 June 1894.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>20 June 1894</td>
<td>22 June 1894.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tennant Creek</td>
<td>Murchison Range Turf Club</td>
<td>25 May 1894.</td>
<td>15 June 1894.</td>
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<td>Borroloola</td>
<td>MRJC</td>
<td>10, 11 July 1894.</td>
<td>31 August 1894.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>2, 3, 4 August 1894</td>
<td>10 August 1894.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The Union</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 December 1894.</td>
<td>28 December 1894.</td>
<td>‘Chow Chow’ Flutter. One race replaced by a Chinese tug-of-war.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1894.</td>
<td>15 February 1895.</td>
<td>Races also 27th and 28th.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Fountain Head</td>
<td>1 January 1895.</td>
<td>4 January 1895.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>30 May 1895.</td>
<td>31 May 1895.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>20 June 1895.</td>
<td>28 June 1895.</td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>8, 9, 10 August 1895</td>
<td>16 August 1895.</td>
<td>2 Chinese races programmed, only run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
<td>Reference (Northern Territory Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
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<td>1895</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td>MRJC</td>
<td>10, 11 July 1895.</td>
<td>2 August 1895.</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>11 November 1895.</td>
<td>15 November 1895.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1895.</td>
<td>10 January 1896.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>25 May 1896.</td>
<td>29 May 1896.</td>
<td>Reported 2 May 1897 that KRTC could not muster fields for race meeting.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>25 June 1896.</td>
<td>3 July 1896.</td>
<td>Aboriginal jockeys in some races.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>7 August 1896.</td>
<td>13 August 1896.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>9 November 1896.</td>
<td>14 November 1896.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 November 1896.</td>
<td>20 November 1896.</td>
<td>Match race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Wandi</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 December 1896.</td>
<td>1 January 1897.</td>
<td>Picnic races.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1896.</td>
<td>1 January 1897.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>27 December 1896.</td>
<td>1 January 1897.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1896</td>
<td>Wandi</td>
<td>Wandi Turf Club.</td>
<td>17 June 1897.</td>
<td>2 July 1897.</td>
<td>First race meeting of the club.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>5, 6, 7 August 1897.</td>
<td>13 August 1897.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>26</td>
<td>5 February</td>
<td>Part of Boxing Day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
<td>Reference (Northern Territory Times unless stated)</td>
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<td></td>
<td>December 1897.</td>
<td>1898.</td>
<td>sports.</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRSTC</td>
<td>26 December 1897.</td>
<td>5 February 1898.</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1897</td>
<td>Glencoe</td>
<td></td>
<td>27 December 1897.</td>
<td>31 December 1897.</td>
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<td>1898</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>20 June 1898.</td>
<td>24 June 1898.</td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
</tr>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>5, 6, 7 August 1898</td>
<td>12 August 1898.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
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<td>13 August 1898.</td>
<td>19 August 1898.</td>
<td>Match race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Glencoe</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 December 1898.</td>
<td>30 December 1898.</td>
<td>2 Chinese races.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1899</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>18 February 1899.</td>
<td>24 February 1899.</td>
<td>Races organised by Chinese.</td>
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<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRSTC</td>
<td>1 April 1899.</td>
<td>5 May 1899.</td>
<td>Port Augusta Despatch</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
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<td>12 November 1899.</td>
<td>17 November 1899.</td>
<td>Match race.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>26 December 1899.</td>
<td>12 January 1900.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
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<td>26 December 1899.</td>
<td>29 December 1899.</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>24 May 1900.</td>
<td>1 June 1900.</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
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<td>1900</td>
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<td>MRTC</td>
<td>28 May 1900.</td>
<td>7 July 1900. Adelaide Observer.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>25 June 1900.</td>
<td>29 June 1900.</td>
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<td>9 August 1900.</td>
<td>17 August 1900.</td>
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<td>31 August 1900.</td>
<td>7 September 1900.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>12 November 1900.</td>
<td>16 November 1900. Chinese Race.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
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<td>26 December 1900.</td>
<td>11 January 1901.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>26 December 1900.</td>
<td>4 January 1901.</td>
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<td>1901</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>1 January 1901.</td>
<td>11 January 1901.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Correla station</td>
<td></td>
<td>8 May 1901.</td>
<td>14 June 1901. Barkly Tablelands</td>
<td></td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>8, 9 August 1901.</td>
<td>16 August 1901.</td>
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<td>BCGRC</td>
<td>5, 6 September 1901.</td>
<td>13 September 1901.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>19 September 1901.</td>
<td>27 September 1901. Chinese race.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 December 1901.</td>
<td>3 January 1902.</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>NTGRC</td>
<td>26 June 1902.</td>
<td>4 July 1902. Chinese race.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>26 July 1902.</td>
<td>1 August 1902. Committee ruled that ‘blackboys’ would not be issued jockey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
<td>Reference (Northern Territory Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Notes:</td>
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<td>1902</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>8, 9, 10 August 1902</td>
<td>15 August 1902.</td>
<td>Protest against all ‘blackboy’ Jockeys.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>21 August 1902</td>
<td>29 August 1902.</td>
<td>Annual races.</td>
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<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1902</td>
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<td>Included ‘Nigger’ Race</td>
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<td>1903</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>17 March 1903</td>
<td>20 March 1903.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>6 August 1903</td>
<td>14 August 1903.</td>
<td>21st annual.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td>BCGRC</td>
<td>27 August 1903</td>
<td>4 September 1903.</td>
<td>4th annual. ‘Blackboys’ race.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>26 December 1903</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>1904</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td>BCGRC</td>
<td>25 August 1904</td>
<td>2 September 1904.</td>
<td>5th annual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Victoria River</td>
<td>VRAT Club Check</td>
<td>14–17 November 1904.</td>
<td>30 December 1904.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td></td>
<td>26 December 1904</td>
<td>13 January 1905.</td>
<td>‘Blackboys’ race.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>MR &amp; STC</td>
<td>26 December 1904</td>
<td></td>
<td>‘Blackboy’ race.</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
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<td>26 December 1905</td>
<td>13 January 1905.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>1905</td>
<td>Victoria River</td>
<td>Victoria River Racing Club (VRC)</td>
<td>November 1905</td>
<td>12 January 1906.</td>
<td>‘Blackboys’ race. ‘Large gathering of blackboys and nondescripts.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>1906</td>
<td>Arltunga</td>
<td>Arltunga Racing Club (ARC)</td>
<td>9 December 1905</td>
<td>26 January 1906.</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>2, 3 August 1906</td>
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<td>22nd annual</td>
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<td>1906</td>
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<td>15 July 1914.</td>
<td>‘Black boy’ and Chinese race in program.</td>
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<td>18 March 1916.</td>
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<td>‘Nigger’ race.</td>
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<td>Daly Waters</td>
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<td>25 December 1916</td>
<td>15 February 1917</td>
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<td>7 September 1918.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
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<td>Club</td>
<td>Date of Race Meeting</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>21 September 1918.</td>
<td>5 October 1918.</td>
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</table>
Table 6: Northern Territory Athletics Carnivals 1869–1918.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Date of Athletics</th>
<th>Reference (NT Times unless stated)</th>
<th>Note: non-White participation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1869</td>
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<td>1870</td>
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<tr>
<td>1871</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>25 December 1871.</td>
<td>3 June 1872. SA Advertiser</td>
<td>Aboriginal spear throwing.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1872</td>
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<tr>
<td>1873</td>
<td>Palmerston Native sports</td>
<td>26 December 1873.</td>
<td>2 January 1874</td>
<td>All Aboriginal participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Yam Creek</td>
<td>26 December 1873.</td>
<td>2 January 1874</td>
<td>‘Native’ Race.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1874</td>
<td>Palmerston Native sports</td>
<td>25 May 1874.</td>
<td>29 May 1874.</td>
<td>Queen’s Birthday. All Aboriginal participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1875</td>
<td>Yam Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1873.</td>
<td>9 January 1874.</td>
<td>Aborigines in main program and won many events. Also a Coolie race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Palmerston Native sports</td>
<td>21 June 1875.</td>
<td>26 June 1875.</td>
<td>Queen’s Birthday. All Aboriginal participants.</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>27 December 1875.</td>
<td>8 January 1876.</td>
<td>‘Coolie’ races.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1876</td>
<td>Southport</td>
<td>1 January 1876.</td>
<td>8 January 1876.</td>
<td>Running, hurdle and swimming race for ‘niggers’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1877</td>
<td>The Union</td>
<td>24 May 1877</td>
<td>9 June 1877</td>
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<td>1879</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>28 September 1879.</td>
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<td>1880</td>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>Pt Darwin Camp</td>
<td>1 January 1881.</td>
<td>8 January 1881.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
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<td>Date of Athletics</td>
<td>Reference (NT Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Note: non-White participation.</td>
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<td>1881</td>
<td>Palmerston Athletic Club</td>
<td>12 March 1881.</td>
<td>19 March 1881.</td>
<td>Races for small boys and ‘Blackfellows’.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>9 November 1881.</td>
<td>13 October 1881.</td>
<td>Match race carnival on Cavanagh Street. Races for, ‘blacks and black boys.’</td>
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<tr>
<td>1882</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>16 February 1882.</td>
<td>18 February 1882.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
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<td>21 February 1882.</td>
<td>25 February 1882.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South port</td>
<td>23 February 1882.</td>
<td>4 March 1882.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Port Darwin Camp</td>
<td>24 May 1882.</td>
<td>3 June 1882.</td>
<td>Program included ‘Lubra’ and ‘Chinese’ race. Aboriginal won maiden event easily.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1883</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>22 February 1883.</td>
<td>24 February 1883.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>28 October 1883.</td>
<td>2 November 1883.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
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<td>Port Darwin Camp</td>
<td>26 December 1883.</td>
<td>29 December 1883 North Australian</td>
<td>Rules excluded Aboriginal participation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1884</td>
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<td>12 June 1884.</td>
<td>13 June 1884.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
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<tr>
<td>1885</td>
<td>South port</td>
<td>1 January 1885.</td>
<td>2 January 1885. North Australian</td>
<td>‘Native’ sports, Aboriginals only. Prizes of flour and tobacco.</td>
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<td>Port Darwin Camp</td>
<td>16 January 1885.</td>
<td>16 January 1885.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
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<td>27 March 1885.</td>
<td>Match race</td>
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<td>1 May 1885.</td>
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<td>Greasy pole for ‘natives’ only.</td>
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<td>9 October 1885.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>22 September 1888.</td>
<td>15 September 1888.</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>8 October 1888.</td>
<td>13 October 1888.</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>10 November 1888.</td>
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<td>1889</td>
<td>Rum Jungle</td>
<td>25 December 1899.</td>
<td>3 January 1890. North Australian</td>
<td>‘nigger’ sports</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>22 August 1889.</td>
<td>24 August 1889. North Australian</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>30 December 1889.</td>
<td>31 January 1890. Port Augusta Despatch</td>
<td>In conjunction with MacDonnell Range Turf Club race meeting.</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>1 January 1890.</td>
<td>3 January 1890.</td>
<td>Races for ‘little darkies’.</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>7 January 1890.</td>
<td>3 January 1890.</td>
<td>C A Murray, Aboriginal. Match race</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>15 February 1890.</td>
<td>14 February 1890.</td>
<td>Weight throwing wager.</td>
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<td>Burrundie</td>
<td>16 March 1890.</td>
<td>21 March 1890.</td>
<td>‘Blacks’ race, 12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
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<td>Date of Athletics</td>
<td>Reference (NT Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Note: non-White participation.</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>25 April 1890.</td>
<td>2 May 1890.</td>
<td>J.G. Night, organised Aboriginal spear throwing and high jump Exhibition for H.M.S. Cordelia.</td>
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<td>1890</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td>26 December 1890.</td>
<td>23 January 1891.</td>
<td>Athletics held in conjunction with horserace’s. Several ‘nigger’ events and spear throwing.</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>1 January 1891.</td>
<td>9 February 1891.</td>
<td>Hurdle and flat ‘Native’ races.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Palmerston NTAA</td>
<td>30 March 1891.</td>
<td>3 April 1891.</td>
<td>Meeting concluded with races for Aborigines.</td>
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<td>1891</td>
<td>The Union</td>
<td>21 May 1891.</td>
<td>29 May 1891.</td>
<td>Meeting concluded with races for Aborigines.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1891</td>
<td>Palmerston NTAA</td>
<td>9 November 1891.</td>
<td>13 November 1891.</td>
<td>Extra events for boys and ‘darkies’.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1892</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>26 December 1891.</td>
<td>1 January 1892.</td>
<td>Hurdle race for ‘darkies’ at conclusion.</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>Palmerston NTAA</td>
<td>18 April 1892.</td>
<td>22 April 1892.</td>
<td>Hurdle and flat races for ‘blacks’ to conclude meeting.</td>
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<td>1892</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>26 December 1892.</td>
<td>23 December 1892.</td>
<td>Advertised program included Chinese and ‘Niggers’ race.</td>
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<td>1893</td>
<td>Palmerston NTAA</td>
<td>14 January 1893.</td>
<td>20 January 1893.</td>
<td>Races for boys, girls and ‘blacks’ to conclude meeting.</td>
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<td>1893</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>3 April 1893.</td>
<td>3 April 1893.</td>
<td>Chinese race</td>
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<td>Date of Athletics</td>
<td>Reference (NT Times unless stated)</td>
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<td>NTAA</td>
<td>The Union</td>
<td>9 November 1893.</td>
<td>17 November 1893.</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>25 November 1893.</td>
<td>1 December 1893.</td>
<td>Races for lads, lasses and ‘darkies’.</td>
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<td>NTAA</td>
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<tr>
<td>1894</td>
<td>Fountain Head</td>
<td>1 January 1894.</td>
<td>5 January 1894.</td>
<td>Chinese and ‘black boys’ race.</td>
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<tr>
<td>1895</td>
<td>Fountain Head</td>
<td>1 January 1895.</td>
<td>4 January 1895.</td>
<td>Chinese race, sack race and ‘black boys’ race</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek PCAC</td>
<td>1 January 1895.</td>
<td>4 January 1895.</td>
<td>Bismark, Aborigine, won main sprint events. Chinese hurdle race and ‘Blackboys’ hurdle race.</td>
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<td>The Union</td>
<td>16 March 1895.</td>
<td>22 March 1895.</td>
<td>Chinese hurdle &amp; flat, ‘blackboys’ race.</td>
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<td>1897</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>19 April 1897.</td>
<td>23 April 1897.</td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
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<td>1898</td>
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<td>7 January 1898.</td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>17 January 1898.</td>
<td>21 January 1898.</td>
<td>Match race &amp; others.</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>30 May 1898.</td>
<td>3 June 1898.</td>
<td>Chinese Race.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>5 January 1900.</td>
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<td>5 January 1899.</td>
<td>Boys foot race.</td>
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<td>‘Blackfellows’ obstacle race.</td>
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<td>Boys bicycle race.</td>
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<td>‘Blackfellows’ tug-o-war.</td>
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<td>1900</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td>24 May 1900.</td>
<td>1 June 1900.</td>
<td>Chinese hurdle race.</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>28 May 1900.</td>
<td>1 June 1900.</td>
<td>Boys &amp; girls children’s races.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>25 June 1900.</td>
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<td>Chinese race</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
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<td>16 November 1900.</td>
<td>‘Blackfellows’ &amp;</td>
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<td>Chinese flat and</td>
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<td>obstacle race, and</td>
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<td>races for boys</td>
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<td>Yam Creek</td>
<td>25 December 1900.</td>
<td>4 January 1901.</td>
<td>Separate Japanese &amp;</td>
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<td>Chinese costume race.</td>
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<td>Chinese flat race.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>4 January 1901.</td>
<td>Chinese race</td>
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<td>1901</td>
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<td>3 June 1901.</td>
<td>7 June 1901.</td>
<td>Chinese race</td>
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<td>NACC / NAAA</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
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<td>Chinese vs Japanese</td>
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<td>tug-o-war.</td>
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<td>1 January 1902.</td>
<td>17 January 1902.</td>
<td>Chinese race</td>
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<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>26 June 1902.</td>
<td>4 July 1902.</td>
<td>Several ‘minor’ events.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
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<td>1903</td>
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<td>Reference (NT Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Note: non-White participation.</td>
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<td>1903</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>1904</td>
<td>Yam Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1904.</td>
<td>1 January 1904.</td>
<td>Aboriginal races. Chinese races.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1904.</td>
<td>1 January 1904.</td>
<td>‘Black boys’ race.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1904.</td>
<td>15 January 1904.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Palmerston NACAA</td>
<td>6 June 1904.</td>
<td>10 June 1904.</td>
<td>Chinese flat race.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
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<td>6 January 1905.</td>
<td>‘Black boys’ race.</td>
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<td>1906</td>
<td>Palmerston NACAA</td>
<td>4 May 1906.</td>
<td>8 June 1906.</td>
<td>Chinese race.</td>
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<td>1907</td>
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<td>3 June 1907.</td>
<td>14 June 1907.</td>
<td>Chinese bicycle race.</td>
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<td>Daly River</td>
<td>26 December 1908.</td>
<td>15 January 1909.</td>
<td>Mainly Aboriginal participants.</td>
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<td>1909</td>
<td>Palmerston</td>
<td>1 January 1910.</td>
<td>7 January 1910.</td>
<td>Long Alick (Aboriginal), won greasy pig.</td>
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<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date of Athletics</td>
<td>Reference (NT Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Note: non-White participation.</td>
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<td>1911</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1911.</td>
<td>31 January 1911.</td>
<td>1st women’s event in NT, eg. not girls.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>12 August 1910.</td>
<td>12 August 1910.</td>
<td>Athletics events in mainly horseracing program.</td>
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<td>Palmerston NACAA</td>
<td>26.06.1911</td>
<td>30.06.1911.</td>
<td>Boys, girls, Chinese, ‘blacks’ races all programmed</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>01,02.09.1911</td>
<td>08.09.1911.</td>
<td>Girls, boys, ‘blackboys’ race.</td>
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<td>Palmerston NACAA</td>
<td>11 October 1911.</td>
<td>13 October 1911.</td>
<td>Boys, girls, Chinese, ‘blacks’ races all programmed.</td>
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<td>1912</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1912.</td>
<td>5 January 1912.</td>
<td>1st union run sports.</td>
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<td>Darwin AWA</td>
<td>8 October 1912.</td>
<td>10 October 1912.</td>
<td>1st union run sports.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek Sports Club</td>
<td>27 December 1912.</td>
<td>9 January 1913.</td>
<td>‘Blackfellows’ race. Married and single women’s race.</td>
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<td>1914</td>
<td>DWAC</td>
<td>1 January 1914.</td>
<td>8 January 1914.</td>
<td>‘Blackfellows’, ‘Blackfellows,’ hurdles, girls and boys races.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>1 January 1914.</td>
<td>22 January 1914.</td>
<td>‘Blackfellows’, ‘Blackfellows,’ hurdles, girls and boys races.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td>17 March 1914.</td>
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<td>‘Blackboys’ race.</td>
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<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td>20 April 1914.</td>
<td>23 April 1914.</td>
<td>‘Blackboys’ race.</td>
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<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>12 October 1914.</td>
<td>29 October 1914.</td>
<td>‘Blackfellows’ race. Football kick event.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Year</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Date of Athletics</td>
<td>Reference (NT Times unless stated)</td>
<td>Note: non-White participation.</td>
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<td>1915</td>
<td>Darwin (DWAC)</td>
<td>1 January 1915</td>
<td>7 January 1915</td>
<td>No entries in Chinese race.</td>
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<td>18 October 1915</td>
<td>23 October 1915</td>
<td>‘Blackfellows’ race</td>
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<td>5 June 1916</td>
<td>18 May 1916</td>
<td>Programmed ‘black boys’, girls and bys races.</td>
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<td>17 June 1916</td>
<td>23 June 1915</td>
<td>‘Blackfellows’ bun eating competition.</td>
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<td>1917</td>
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<td>1918</td>
<td>Darwin</td>
<td>16 March 1918</td>
<td>23 March 1918</td>
<td>St Patrick’s day program included girls, boys and ‘nigger’ races.</td>
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<td>5 May 1918</td>
<td>11 May 1918</td>
<td>Chinese boys and international race.</td>
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<td>NT Industrial Council Lab day</td>
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<td>RSL</td>
<td>16 June 1918</td>
<td>21 May 1918</td>
<td>Program included Aborigines cock fight.</td>
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</table>

NTAA: Northern Territory Athletics Association.
PCAC: Pine Creek Athletics Club.
NACC: North Australian Cycling Club.
NACAA: North Australian Cycling and Athletics Association.
AWA: Australian Workers Association.
DWAC: Darwin Workers Amusement Club.
PCWAC: Pine Creek Workers Amusement Club.
RSL: Returned Servicemen League.
Appendix 4: Northern Territory Horseracing, 1869–1918; White Participants Complicit in Aboriginal Deaths and/or Punitive Raids and/or ‘Dispersals’.

This table illustrates that from 1875 to 1918 many race meetings included the attendance of known, murders and/or men with a reputation for violence on the frontier. Some of the best know, such as Uhr, Cahill, Stevens and Sayle, were highly regarded as ‘sportsmen’. If the table were extended to include all sports, it would be more revealing. Attendance at race meetings is documented in Stephen ‘Sport and Leisure Database’. The evidence of involvement in Aboriginal deaths or punitive raids is listed only in the first reference of each individual. Only the author and page number are identified. See bibliography for full details.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Occupation</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Club</th>
<th>Role</th>
<th>Date NTTG or North Australian</th>
<th>Date of Event (approximate)</th>
<th>Notes &amp; Source in relation to complicit in Aboriginal Deaths and/or Punitive and/or ‘Dispersals’</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, H W H</td>
<td>Owner rider</td>
<td>Darwin Pt</td>
<td>Owner</td>
<td>13/11/1875</td>
<td>9/11/1875</td>
<td>Daly River murders, member of board of enquiry, killings on his properties. Roberts, 131.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peterson, J</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>8/01/1876</td>
<td>27/12/1875</td>
<td>Daly Waters, reprisal raid after OT staff murdered, Roberts, 117.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
<td>Date of Event (approximate)</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Source in relation to complicit in Aboriginal Deaths and/or Punitive and/or ‘Dispersals</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becker, F senior</td>
<td>Police/Mounted</td>
<td>The Union</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>9/06/1877</td>
<td>24/05/1877</td>
<td>Reprisal raid after Daly Waters OT staff murdered, Roberts, 119. Becker and his sons were regular participants in all sports, 1874–1896.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, H W H</td>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>PHRC</td>
<td>steward</td>
<td>11/08/1877</td>
<td>9/08/1877</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cuthbertson, W R</td>
<td>Civil Servant/misc</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>rider/owner</td>
<td>1/03/1879</td>
<td>22/02/1879</td>
<td>Daly River murders, Special constable, captured and held Aboriginals. Reid, 102.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, H W H</td>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>rider/owner</td>
<td>1/03/1879</td>
<td>22/02/1879</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, H W H</td>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>rider/owner</td>
<td>1/03/1879</td>
<td>26/02/1879</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devlin, Michael</td>
<td>Station worker</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Charlotte Waters</td>
<td></td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>13/06/1879</td>
<td>8/04/1879</td>
<td>Complicit in Killings on Tempe Downs, denial of events. Nettlebeck and Foster, 105.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Masson, H</td>
<td>Licensee/Publican</td>
<td>Port Dwn Camp</td>
<td></td>
<td>rider/owner</td>
<td>8/01/1881</td>
<td>1/01/1881</td>
<td>Reprisal raid after Daly River killings See Roberts, 126.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman, J</td>
<td>Horsetrainer/Jockey</td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>25/03/1882</td>
<td>13/02/1882</td>
<td>Retaliation for attacks on station. Nettlebeck and Foster, 29.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Norman, J</td>
<td>Horsetrainer/Jockey</td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>27/01/1883</td>
<td>26/12/1882</td>
<td>See above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
<td>Date of Event (approximate)</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Source in relation to complicit in Aboriginal Deaths and/or Punitive and/or 'Dispersals'</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sayle, T</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Port Dwn Camp</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>12/01/1884</td>
<td>1/01/1884</td>
<td>Punitive raids on Roper and Saint Vidgeon stations, Roper Valley. Merlan, 98.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Darwin Pt Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>29/08/1884</td>
<td>29/08/1884</td>
<td>1895 after an ambush on Victoria River killed Aborigines, Mulvaney, 8. See also Roberts, 210, on work in Barkly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uhr</td>
<td>Licensee/Publican</td>
<td>Darwin Pt Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td></td>
<td>28/03/1885</td>
<td>21/03/1885</td>
<td>Charged with murder while member of native police in Qld, Richards, 265. Roberts, 12 &amp; 103.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uhr</td>
<td>Licensee/Publican</td>
<td>Darwin Pt Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>7/08/1885</td>
<td>4/08/1885</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayle, T</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Darwin Pt Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>4/09/1885</td>
<td>29/08/1885</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uhr, D</td>
<td>Licensee/Publican</td>
<td>Darwin Pt Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>4/09/1885</td>
<td>29/08/1885</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayle, T</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Port Dwn Camp</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>25/09/1885</td>
<td>22/09/1885</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayle, R</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Port Dwn Camp</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>8/01/1886</td>
<td>25/12/1885</td>
<td>Associate of Nat Buchanan, Reprisal for Travers Killing, VRD. Reid, 86.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayle, T</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Port Dwn Camp</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>8/01/1886</td>
<td>25/12/1885</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayle, T</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Port Dwn Camp</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>10/07/1886</td>
<td>6/07/1886</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
<td>Date of Event (approximate)</td>
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<tr>
<td>Donegan, Michael</td>
<td>Police/Mounted</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>9/04/1887</td>
<td>1/01/1887</td>
<td>See Roberts, 192–4.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Curtis, William</td>
<td>Police/Mounted</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>9/04/1887</td>
<td>1/01/1887</td>
<td>Suspected involvement in massacre on McArthur River Station. Roberts, 133.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Flanigan, C</td>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Pt /Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>6/08/1887</td>
<td>26/08/1887</td>
<td>Flanagan Was an Aboriginal, who worked on VRD stations for Whites. Charged with murder. Reid, 153.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinner, H M</td>
<td>Station Manager and JP.</td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>10/05/1888</td>
<td>5/04/1888</td>
<td>Colluded in cover up into killing of Aboriginal prisoner. Nettlebeck and Foster, 44.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benstead, W</td>
<td></td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>10/05/1888</td>
<td>5/04/1888</td>
<td>Reprisals after Anna Reservoir attacks. Nettlebeck and Foster, 17, 34.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power, C</td>
<td>Police/Mounted</td>
<td>Burrundie</td>
<td>BTC</td>
<td>Committee Member</td>
<td>5/05/1888</td>
<td>30/04/1888</td>
<td>Reprisals for Duncan Campbells death in 1882. Reid, 90. Also Part of NT native police with Willshire, Roberts, 132. Was McArthur River Jockey Club Secretary 1893–94.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Benstead, W</td>
<td>Licensee/Publican</td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>31/01/1890</td>
<td>26/12/1889</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson, J</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Darwin Pt /Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>24/04/1891</td>
<td>20/04/1891</td>
<td>Murdered Aborigines, Rose, 85. On Willshire expedition following Ligar and Mulligan attack 1895. Willshire, Land of the Dawning, 75.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinner, H M</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>29/05/1891</td>
<td>25/05/1891</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>29/05/1891</td>
<td>25/05/1891</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>14/08/1891</td>
<td>7/08/1891</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Becker, F sen</td>
<td>Civil Servant/misc</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>14/08/1891</td>
<td>7/08/1891</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>14/08/1891</td>
<td>7/08/1891</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson, J</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>29/04/1892</td>
<td>23/04/1892</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Palmer,</td>
<td>Station Manager</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>Clerk of Scales</td>
<td>26/05/1893</td>
<td>24/05/1893</td>
<td>Reprisal for Duncan Campbells death 1882, Reid, 90.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, A J</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>judge</td>
<td>26/05/1893</td>
<td>24/05/1893</td>
<td>'dispersal' on overland expedition. 1870s, McGrath, 8. On Daly River reprisals, NTTG 6/03/1886.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutton, J.C</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td>MRvTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>31/08/1894</td>
<td>10/07/1894</td>
<td>Punitive raid after Creswell Downs killings, Roberts, 221.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinner, H M</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td>MRvTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>31/08/1894</td>
<td>10/07/1894</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daer,</td>
<td>Mounted Constable</td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>1/12/1894</td>
<td>26/12/1894</td>
<td>Killed Aborigines when ‘attacked’, Nettlebeck and Foster, 45.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grantham, C</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Fountain Head&quot;</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4/01/1895</td>
<td>1/01/1895</td>
<td>On Willshire expedition following Ligar and Mulligan attack 1895. Willshire, Land of the Dawning, 75.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Watson, J</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>Meeting</td>
<td>15/03/1895</td>
<td>9/03/1895</td>
<td>See Rose, 85.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anderson, J R</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>31/05/1895</td>
<td>30/05/1895</td>
<td>On Willshire expedition following Ligar and Mulligan attack 1895. Willshire, Land of the Dawning, 75.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinner, H M</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>31/05/1895</td>
<td>30/05/1895</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutton, J C</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Borroloola</td>
<td>MRvTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>2/08/1895</td>
<td>10/07/1895</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Skinner, H M</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>14/08/1896</td>
<td>7/08/1896</td>
<td>See above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Stretton, W G</td>
<td>Civil Servant/misc</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>steward</td>
<td>12/08/1898</td>
<td>5/08/1898</td>
<td>Police trooper at time of reprisal raid after Ellis murder in 1870s. Roberts, 123.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Coulthard, W</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Alice springs</td>
<td>MRTC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>5/05/1899</td>
<td>1/04/1899</td>
<td>Frew River Manager, Involvement in murder of Aborigines. Reid, 120.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, A J</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>9/06/1899</td>
<td>27/05/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, A J</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>judge</td>
<td>9/06/1899</td>
<td>27/05/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>starter</td>
<td>18/08/1899</td>
<td>11/08/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
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<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>18/08/1899</td>
<td>11/08/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>18/08/1899</td>
<td>11/08/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>rider/owner</td>
<td>18/08/1899</td>
<td>11/08/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rees, W</td>
<td>stockman</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>18/08/1899</td>
<td>11/08/1899</td>
<td>Gave gift to Willshire on Departure from VRD, Willshire was considered a ‘thoroughly practical man’, Willshire, Land of the Dawning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stretton, W G</td>
<td>Civil Servant/misc</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>handicapper</td>
<td>18/08/1899</td>
<td>11/08/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>starter</td>
<td>17/11/1899</td>
<td>13/11/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grantham, C</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>jockey/rider</td>
<td>12/01/1900</td>
<td>26/12/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Grantham, C</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>12/01/1900</td>
<td>26/12/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rees, W</td>
<td>stockman</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>29/12/1899</td>
<td>26/12/1899</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>17/08/1900</td>
<td>9/08/1900</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hutton,</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>14/06/1901</td>
<td>8/05/1901</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt/Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>16/08/1901</td>
<td>8/08/1901</td>
<td>See above.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
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<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt /Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>steward</td>
<td>16/08/1901</td>
<td>8/08/1901</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt /Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>proposed toast</td>
<td>16/08/1901</td>
<td>9/08/1901</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Giles, A</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td>BCGRC</td>
<td>judge</td>
<td>13/09/1901</td>
<td>5/09/1901</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sayle, T</td>
<td></td>
<td>Darwin Pt /Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>15/08/1902</td>
<td>8/08/1902</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, T</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Brocks Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>rider/owner</td>
<td>20/03/1903</td>
<td>17/03/1903</td>
<td>Involvement in ‘dispersals’ in the Gulf. Roberts, 57, 211. Willshire praised Thomas Cahill, as ‘thoroughly practical and energetic man.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, T</td>
<td>Station Owner/Pastoralist</td>
<td>Victoria River Dist</td>
<td>VRATC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>30/12/1904</td>
<td>14/11/1904</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweeney, C</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Victoria River Dist</td>
<td>VRATC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>30/12/1904</td>
<td>14/11/1904</td>
<td>Queensland Aborigine with a ‘Lust for blood!’ Rose, 51,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sweeney,</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Victoria River Dist</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>12/01/1906</td>
<td>1/11/1905</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusack, T C</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Victoria River Dist</td>
<td></td>
<td>Chairman</td>
<td>12/01/1906</td>
<td>1/11/1905</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Name</td>
<td>Occupation</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Club</td>
<td>Role</td>
<td>Date NTTG or North Australian</td>
<td>Date of Event (approximate)</td>
<td>Notes &amp; Source in relation to complicit in Aboriginal Deaths and/or Punitive and/or 'Dispersals'</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusack, T</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Victoria River Dist</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>18/01/1907</td>
<td>25/12/1906</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cahill, P</td>
<td>Pearling</td>
<td>Darwin Pt /Palmerston</td>
<td>NTRC</td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>14/08/1908</td>
<td>6/07/1908</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusack, T</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Victoria River Dist</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>4/12/1908</td>
<td>19/11/1908</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cusack, J</td>
<td>Stockman</td>
<td>Victoria River Dist</td>
<td></td>
<td>owner</td>
<td>28/01/1910</td>
<td>20/11/1909</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stevens, G</td>
<td>Butcher</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td></td>
<td>Player / Participant</td>
<td>30/03/1916</td>
<td>18/03/1916</td>
<td>Involvement in Roper River ‘dispersals’. See Merlan. 98.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLennan, J</td>
<td>Elsey Station Manager</td>
<td>Pine Creek</td>
<td>PCTC</td>
<td>Committee Member</td>
<td>6/07/1918</td>
<td>5/07/1918</td>
<td>Involved in punitive raids on Elsey Station, Merlan, 88. Roberts, 150.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>McLennan, J</td>
<td></td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td>KRTC</td>
<td>attended/ spectator</td>
<td>7/09/1918</td>
<td>3/09/1918</td>
<td>See above.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key to Race Clubs**

- **BCGRC** - Brocks Creek Goldfields Race Club
- **PHRC** - Palmerston Race Club
- **KRTC** - Katherine Rive Turf Club
- **NTGRC** - Northern Territory Goldfields Race Club
- **MRTC** - McDonnell Range Turf Club
- **NTRC** - Northern Territory Race Club
- **MRvTC** - Macarthur River Turf Club (Also Macarthur River Jockey Club)
- **VRATC** - Victoria River Amateur Turf Club
- **PCTC** - Pine Creek Turf Club
### Appendix 5: Northern Territory Football League

**Bicentennial Carnival Team: Second Division Champions**

*Players with Aboriginal and/or Asian heritage.

For a photograph of the team, see *Black Gold*, 145.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Notes</th>
<th>Player</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Athanasiou</td>
<td></td>
<td>Michael Long*</td>
<td>Member of AISHOF.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Joe Ah Mat*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Peter McGann</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Damien Berto*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Michael McLean*</td>
<td>Member of AISHOF. Captain, 1994 AFL Aboriginal All-Stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ninny Briston*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Adrian Moscheni</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Bruce</td>
<td></td>
<td>Mark Motlop*</td>
<td>See <em>Black Gold</em>, 119.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roy Cassetti</td>
<td></td>
<td>Paul Motlop*</td>
<td>See <em>Black Gold</em>, 119.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Eddie Cubillo*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kelly O’Donnell</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cadji Dunn*</td>
<td></td>
<td>Cyril Rioli*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dennis Dunn*</td>
<td>Selected in 1994 AFL Aboriginal All-Stars</td>
<td>Maurice Rioli*</td>
<td>Member of AISHOF. Coach, 1994 AFL Aboriginal All-Stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rohan Helyer</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willie Rioli*</td>
<td>Selected in 1994 AFL Aboriginal All-Stars</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brentley Hughes</td>
<td></td>
<td>Willie Roe*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russell Jeffery*</td>
<td>Selected in 1994 AFL Aboriginal All-Stars</td>
<td>Tony Vigone*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bob Jones</td>
<td></td>
<td>Kevin Wanganeen*</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brian Long*</td>
<td></td>
<td>AISHOF: The Aboriginal and Islander Sport Hall of Fame</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 6: Northern Territory Olympians.

* Aboriginal and/or Asian heritage.

Table 8: Northern Territory Olympians.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Michael Ahmatt*</td>
<td>Basketball</td>
<td>1964</td>
<td>Tokyo</td>
<td>Member of the Aboriginal and Islander Sports Hall of Fame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1968</td>
<td>Mexico</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nova Peris*</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>Member of the Aboriginal and Islander Sports Hall of Fame.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>James Swan*</td>
<td>Boxing</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td>See Black Gold, 57.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerry Dienelt</td>
<td>Softball</td>
<td>1996</td>
<td>Atlanta</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stephen Holt</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>2000</td>
<td>Sydney</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark Hickman</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greg Chan*</td>
<td>Clay Target Shooting (Coach)</td>
<td>2004</td>
<td>Athens</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Des Abbott*</td>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>2008</td>
<td>Beijing</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 7: Aboriginal Elected Members to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly

Table 9: Aboriginal Elected Members to the Northern Territory Legislative Assembly

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Member</th>
<th>Division</th>
<th>From</th>
<th>To</th>
<th>Party</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hyacinth Tungutalum, Tiwi</td>
<td>1974</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>CLP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neville Perkins MacDonnell</td>
<td>1977</td>
<td>1981</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wesley Lanhupuy Arnhem</td>
<td>1983</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Stanley Tipiloura Arafura</td>
<td>1987</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maurice Rioli Arafura</td>
<td>1992</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>John Ah Kit Arnhem</td>
<td>1995</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marion Scrymgour Arafura</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>current</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Elliot McAdam Barkly</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Matthew Bonson Millner</td>
<td>2001</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malandirri McCarthy Arnhem</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>current</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Alison Anderson MacDonnell</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>current</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl Hampton Stuart</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>current</td>
<td>ALP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Adam Giles Braitling</td>
<td>2005</td>
<td>current</td>
<td>CLP</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

CLP  Country Liberal Party (Country Liberals from 2009)
ALP  Australian Labor Party

---

Appendix 8: Northern Territory Teams in National Leagues.

Table 10: Northern Territory Teams in National Leagues.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sport</th>
<th>Team Name</th>
<th>National Competition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rugby union,</td>
<td>Darwin Mosquitoes</td>
<td>Australian Rugby Shield</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rugby League</td>
<td>Northern Territory Titans</td>
<td>Australian Affiliated States Championship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hockey</td>
<td>Stingers (Men)</td>
<td>Australian Hockey League</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pearls (Women)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Netball</td>
<td>Northern Territory</td>
<td>Australian Netball League</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix 9: Northern Territory Regional Football Leagues, 2008–09

Distances are approximate. Not all league games are played in the league’s main urban centre. If teams can reduce their travel because they can play in one of the communities they often do so. However, the majority of games and all finals are played in the main urban centre. The leagues provide no assistance with travel costs despite the fact that community teams forfeit the financial and playing benefits of ‘home’ games.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Distance to Katherine one way, Kms.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Beswick Football Club</td>
<td>Beswick</td>
<td>110</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Barunga Football Club</td>
<td>Barunga</td>
<td>90</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kalano Football Club</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lajamanu Football Club</td>
<td>Lajamanu (North Walperi)</td>
<td>557</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ngukurr Football Club</td>
<td>Ngukurr</td>
<td>320</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Katherine Kannons Football Club</td>
<td>Katherine</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tindal Magpies Football Club</td>
<td>Tindal Air Base</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Minyerri Football Club</td>
<td>Minyerri</td>
<td>300</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gurindji Football Club</td>
<td>Kalkaringi</td>
<td>460</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jilkmingan Football Club</td>
<td>Jilkmingan</td>
<td>120</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Numbulwar Football Club</td>
<td>Numbulwar</td>
<td>475</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 12: AFL Barkly (Based in Tennant Creek)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Distance to Tennant Creek one way, Kms.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Arlparra Football Club</td>
<td>Willowra</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Willowra Football Club</td>
<td>Willowra</td>
<td>427</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Canteen Creek Football Club</td>
<td>Canteen Creek</td>
<td>266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Epenarra Football Club</td>
<td>Epenarra</td>
<td>206</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tennant Creek Football Club</td>
<td>Tennant Creek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sporties Spitfires Football Club</td>
<td>Tennant Creek</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Marla Football Club</td>
<td>Newcastle Waters</td>
<td>280</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ali Curung Football Club</td>
<td>Ali Curung</td>
<td>170</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 13: AFL Central Australia

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Team</th>
<th>Home</th>
<th>Distance to Alice Springs, one way, Kms.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Anmatjere Football Club</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td>200</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Federal Football Club</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Wests Football Club</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pioneers Football Club</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ltyentye Apurte Football Club</td>
<td>Ltyentye Apurte</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rovers Football Club</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hermannsburg Football Club</td>
<td>Hermannsburg</td>
<td>125</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Alice Springs Football Club</td>
<td>Alice Springs</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Papunya Football Club</td>
<td>Papunya</td>
<td>260</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Yuendumu Football Club</td>
<td>Yuendumu</td>
<td>290</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Team</td>
<td>Home</td>
<td>Distance to Nhulunbuy, one way, Kms.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>--------------------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Saints Football Club</td>
<td>Gove</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Djarrak Football Club</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gopu Football Club</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nguykal Football Club</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Baywara Football Club</td>
<td>Yirrkala</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>